

THE OLIVE GARDEN

A TALE OF
MARATHON AND SALAMIS

CHECKED 1971

by
J. H. MACLEHOSE

THOMAS NELSON & SONS LTD
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

First published, 1941

TO
THE PUPILS OF
BALFRON HIGH SCHOOL

“FOR the whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men ; and the story is not graven only on stone over their native earth but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men’s lives. For you know it remains to rival what they have done.”

PERICLES.

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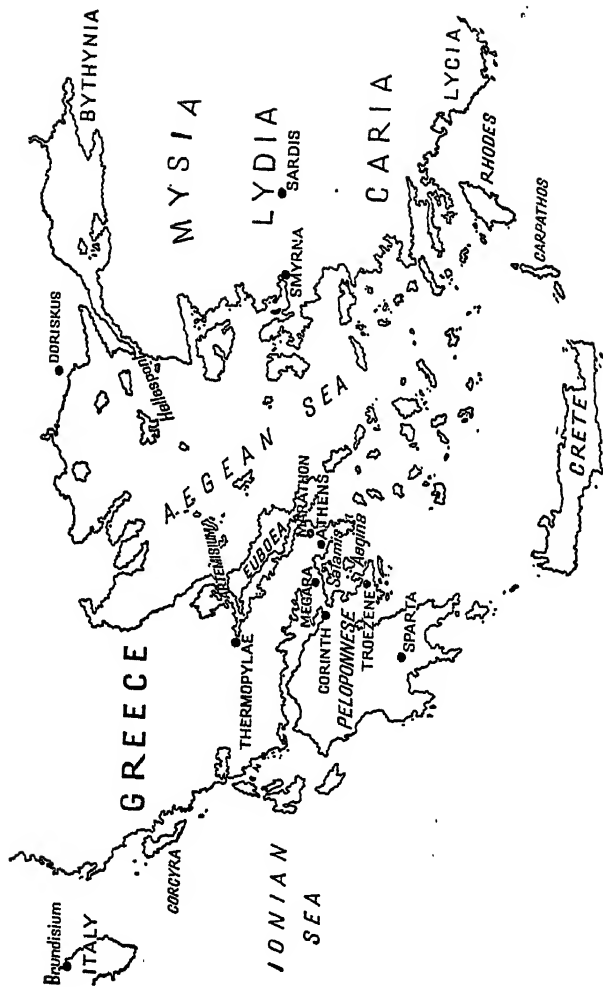
THE STORY OF ODYSSEUS

THE STORY OF ACHILLES

translated by W. H. ROUSE

THE OLIVE GARDEN

No. 226



THE OLIVE GARDEN

CHAPTER I

THE MARKET-PLACE

THERE was nothing but clatter and chatter in the long low house at the corner of the Street of Apollo. Like all the houses in Athens, that of Archelous the magistrate was a square building surrounding an open courtyard. To the outer world it presented a blank wall, broken only by the main door, but inside, the rooms opening off the covered veranda were bright and home-like, gay with coloured curtains and cushions. In the centre of the courtyard stood the family altar. At one side a marble bench and several stools were set out under a spreading lime tree, and all round were flowers and shrubs, blooming gaily in huge painted jars.

Where the entrance from the street opened on to the veranda, Cleander, the son of Archelous, leaned disconsolately against a pillar. He could hear the excited voices of his mother and the women slaves from the loom-room. Sometimes his two young sisters, Eunice and Chlaris, came trotting past him, carrying bundles of fine clothing or precious the ments which the slaves were packing into big the

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background. Others were hurriedly packing their goods back into their baskets in readiness to leave.

Cleander was just going to help himself to a particularly rosy apple from a near-by stall when the sound of marching feet rose above the babel of noise. From the direction of the Acropolis a company of hoplites, the heavy-armed soldiers of Athens, marched across the market-place. The sun struck sparks of lightning from their burnished arms. The crowd swayed and parted to let them through, closing again behind them as the blue waters of the Aegean might close behind a forging trireme. In their wake marched a small boy, and with a shout Cleander hailed his schoolfellow Demetrius.

"Wait, Demetrius, wait!" he shouted, running after his friend.

"I can't wait!" shouted back Demetrius impatiently. "I'm following these soldiers."

"But where are they going?" asked Cleander, now running alongside. "And what's the matter? Why are all the people so excited?"

"Don't bother me," said Demetrius crossly. "You're too small to understand."

Rage seized Cleander then, for wasn't he only two years younger than Demetrius, and far cleverer at school? Furiously he tugged at the older boy's tunic until the shoulder-pin gave way and Demetrius had perforce to stop to pick it up.

"Let me alone, will you," he shouted, striking at Cleander, but the other dodged the blow and struck back manfully.

Suddenly a hand was laid on a shoulder of each, and

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a calm voice asked quietly, "What's the trouble here?"

Angrily Cleander blurted out his complaint.

"I want to know what's wrong," he explained, "and why every one is talking so much, and where the soldiers are going. But Demetrius won't tell me."

"He's too little to understand," grumbled Demetrius.

The man who stood between them wore the helmet and breastplate of the heavy-armed soldier, but carried no shield as yet. His face was stern and thoughtful, with heavy curling beard and piercing eyes. When he smiled, however, the rugged grandeur of his look was softened, and the boys were reassured.

"Come into this corner," he suggested, "and I will tell you what has happened."

Willingly the two boys followed him into the shade of one of the colonnades, their sudden anger as swiftly forgotten.

"Did you ever hear of the Persians?" asked the stranger.

"Of course," said Cleander quickly. "They live far across the sea, and have a great king to rule over them."

"So they do," was the smiling answer; "but there is more about them than that. The great king who rules over them is a tyrant. He will not give freedom to his own subjects, and he would even try to steal their liberty from other peoples. Among those whom he has conquered are our kinsmen across the sea in the cities of Ionia."

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baskets. Cleander eyed them impatiently. He was a handsome boy of twelve, with fair curly hair and wide-open steady blue eyes that seemed to take in every detail of the scene. His blue tunic was of fine material, fastened with bronze pins on the shoulders, setting off well his sturdy sunburned arms and legs.

A frown of puzzlement settled on his face now as he watched the stir and bustle. What was the meaning of all this activity, this packing of baskets, this shrill excited talk? Nobody seemed to have time to bother with him. The slave who should have gone with him to school had gone out with Archelous, so there would be no lessons to-day. Something unusual was afoot. There was excitement in the very air. How could a man of twelve be shut up here with the women when the streets were agog with news?

With a shake of his shoulders the boy tightened the girdle round his waist, turned his back on the shady coolness of the courtyard, and slipped out into the street. There was no one in sight. The summer sun drenched the white houses of Athens in a glare of light, and under the walls the shadows were black as ebony. From the direction of the market-place came the confused noise of crowds, muffled by the intervening walls.

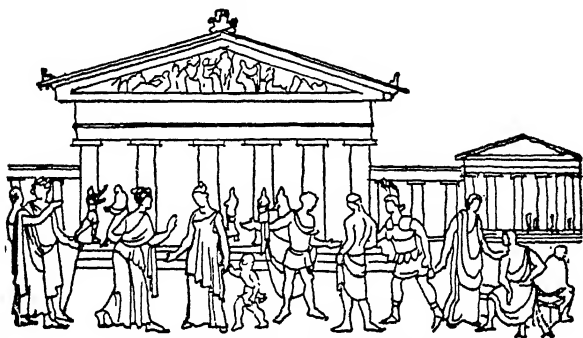
Cleander's eyes sparkled. This was a real adventure, to slip out into the city without that tiresome Xanthias always at his heels. Soon he was picking his way along the street, avoiding the deeper ruts and the heaps of refuse which here and there over-

into his path. Always the noise grew louder,

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and when at last the market-place opened before him it seemed as if pandemonium had broken loose.

Curiously the boy gazed around. Under the long colonnades surrounding the market-place stood groups of men, their faces dark with anger or drawn with anxiety. Others hurried from group to group,



Greeks in the market-place.

carrying tidings or seeking information, their faces expressing all the varying moods of excitement and gloom.

From the direction of the metal-workers' booths came the clang and clatter of hammer and harness, helmet and breastplate, sword and greaves, while impatient soldiers stamped on the threshold, urging the smiths to greater haste. The stall-holders in the centre of the market seemed to have lost interest in their trade. Some had deserted their stalls to join the crowd that eddied round them, regardless of the stray dogs and small boys hovering hopefully in the

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background. Others were hurriedly packing their goods back into their baskets in readiness to leave.

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"I know," cried Cleander. "They rebelled against Darius, but he beat them."

"Right again," replied the stranger. "Ever since then, Darius the Persian has planned to conquer the Athenians as a punishment for the help they gave their kinsmen. Every day, they say, as his slaves set food before him they exclaim, 'Sire, remember the Athenians.' So his anger is fresh kindled against us every day. Last year he sent a fleet to attack us, but the gods were with us. A great storm arose, and all that mighty fleet was scattered and destroyed. Now he has tried again. This time the fleet has sailed safely to Greece and the soldiers of Persia have landed at Marathon."

"There you are, Cleander," said Demetrius scornfully. "Now you know why the people are excited and why the soldiers are marching out of Athens. But what can they do against the Persians?"

The younger boy was gazing with anxious eyes into the stranger's face.

"My father says the Spartans are the greatest soldiers in the world," he said at last. "Won't they come and help us?"

The stranger stroked his beard thoughtfully for a moment before replying.

"They have their own problems," he said at last. "But remember this, lads: freedom is the greatest gift of the gods, but it is not given without conditions. Men must make themselves worthy to receive it. Remember this too, when one city loses its freedom a blow is struck at the liberty of all. That is something that the Spartans have never realized yet."

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His voice took on a deeper note, and looking up Cleander saw a light in his eyes and a glow over his whole face.

"Who fights for Athens fights for Greece and for the spirit of Hellas," he exclaimed. "He will leave a name undying in the memory of his countrymen."

Just then a young man also in full armour came hurrying past. Clapping a hand on the arm of the boys' companion, he drew him away from them.

"Come, Aeschylus," he cried impatiently, "there are great things afoot. Pheidippides has returned from Sparta and goes to make his report to the generals. Yet here you linger chattering to a couple of youngsters."

"They must learn, Kynegeiros; they must learn," answered the stranger mildly. "They must take their stand for freedom when you and I are gone."

With a smile and a salute he turned away, leaving the two boys standing by the pillar gazing after him. Cleander grasped his companion impulsively by the arm.

"Quick, Demetrius," he whispered, "let's follow and see what is happening. We may even be able to hear something."

Swiftly the two boys threaded their way through the crowds, now dodging round the pillars of the colonnades, now ducking among the stalls and booths in the open spaces, steadily making their way towards the State Council Hall at the upper end of the market-place. The hall itself was surrounded by pillars, and in the shade of one of these they took their stand.

"Here come the generals," whispered Demetrius.

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"See, there's Miltiades. What a proud look he has. Any one could tell he had been a tyrant in his day."

"Who is that, Demetrius," questioned Cleander, "that man with the dark hair and flashing eyes? How he talks and laughs. That must surely be his dearest friend with him. Look how he lays his arm around his shoulder."

Demetrius chuckled knowingly. "Friend? No, indeed. They are more like enemies. But Themistocles knows how to charm even his enemies. My father swears that Themistocles will do great things yet for Athens. The man with him is Aristeides. A good sober soul, my father says."

Cleander looked at Demetrius with awestruck eyes. How wonderful to speak familiarly of the great men like that! How he himself would have rejoiced even to know their names.

"How does your father know them all so well, Demetrius?" he asked at last.

"O, my father knows every one in Athens," was the reply. "Don't you know that he has a thousand slaves in the silver mines at Laurium? The generals are glad to be his friends, and even dine at our house."

Cleander sighed. His father was old-fashioned, drawing his wealth from his own olive-gardens, and from his ships, which traded to all parts of the Mediterranean. Rich he might be, but not to compare with one who owned a thousand slaves in the great silver mines. No generals ever sat at his table, and Cleander sighed again enviously.

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Suddenly from the market-place a great crowd surged forward. The noise of their trampling and of their eager, excited shouts filled the air, where the startled doves darted hither and thither, their white wings flashing against the blue sky.

"What is it?" gasped Cleander.

"Pheidippides! Pheidippides!" shouted the crowd. Some waved their clenched fists towards the sea, where beyond the isle of Aegina the mountains of Sparta lay like a grey cloud on the horizon. Others gazed anxiously towards the north, as if expecting at any moment to see the hosts of Persia bursting through the city walls.

In the forefront of the crowd walked Pheidippides the courier. Tall, bronzed, perfectly formed in every limb, he looked the very incarnation of the spirit of freedom-loving Athens. His fair hair lay damp on his brow, and the dust of the road still clung to him, streaked with dark channels of sweat. Unmoved by the cheers and groans of the crowd, he marched steadily forward and entered the Council Hall to make his report.

"Here, Cleander," whispered Demetrius, "I'll stand close to the wall, and if you climb on my shoulders you may be able to hear or even see. Quick!"

Squaring his sturdy body, he helped the younger boy to mount on his shoulders. Clutching the pillar with both arms, Cleander steadied himself, and found that he could indeed see into the hall. There sat the generals of the Supreme Council, and before them stood Pheidippides calmly giving his report, telling

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of the Spartan reply to the Athenians' appeal for help.

"I was received with every courtesy," he said. "The Spartans do indeed promise aid, but not until after the full moon. They are engaged in religious ceremonies, and may not interrupt them. After the moon is at the full they will send an army."

Instantly a clamour broke out in the august assembly.

"Impossible," cried one.

"Hopeless," cried another. "By the time they get here we shall be dead, and our wives and children carried captive to Persia. Are the Spartans mad?"

"No matter," cried another; "they may not desecrate their altars. We must fight alone."

"Fight alone!" shouted several. "It is we who must be mad. Athens alone defy the power of Persia! Are the halls of Hades so empty that we should fill them with Athenian citizens?"

"Cleander, Cleander," whispered Demetrius urgently, "what's happening? What are they saying?"

"Now they are listening to Miltiades," whispered back Cleander. "He wants them to fight. O they must listen to him, they must listen! They must fight. Now they are voting. O, Demetrius, five have voted for Miltiades and five against. What will they do now? Wait! Here comes another man. Who can this be? His hair is grey and he wears a purple cloak."

"Callimachus," answered Demetrius. "He is the chief general. He will have the casting vote."

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"Yes, 'yes, he's voting now. He's voting for Miltiades. Athena send him fortune. Yes, they are all agreeing now. Even those who voted against him are willing to go with the majority. Miltiades is giving the command to march to Marathon."

Cleander jumped down from his perch, his eyes sparkling with excitement. Demetrius straightened his shoulders and rubbed his cramped limbs. His face was gloomy.

"How can we fight the Persians alone?" he asked sullenly. "I must go home. Miltiades is mad, and so are you."

He turned to run off and bumped into a stalwart figure. It was their friend of the market-place, and Cleander greeted him rapturously.

"Sir," he cried, "you will fight for freedom and for Greece! O why am I not old enough to go too!"

Aeschylus smiled with tender sympathy.

"Your time will come, lad," he said. "Only set your heart on Liberty and she will bring you where you may best serve her cause. It may be we shall meet again, but if not, farewell."

He turned and was lost in the crowd, and Cleander stood watching through a mist of tears the crested helmet threading its way among the throng. At last it disappeared.

"He has gone, Demetrius," said Cleander sadly. But when he turned he found that Demetrius too had disappeared and he was alone.

CHAPTER II

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CLEANDER turned thoughtfully away from the Council Hall and began to stroll back to the market-place, his sandalled feet kicking up little puffs of dust at every step. It was past noon, and the crowds who had earlier thronged the square had scattered, some perhaps to an afternoon siesta, others to the baths or gymnasium for exercise. One or two stray dogs prowled round the empty stalls in search of tit-bits, and a slave crossed the open ground with a basket on his head, his squat shadow bobbing at his heels.

The boy seated himself on the pedestal of a pillar and tried to think things out. The morning's adventure had filled his head with a host of new ideas, and he must somehow disentangle them. The words of Aeschylus and Miltiades, freedom and tyranny, war and submission, what did they all mean?

Scraps of conversation overheard in his father's house came back to him with new significance. There had been a day, three or four years before, when Archelous had come in rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"Well, husband," Cleander's mother had said, "what answer did they give to the Persian envoy?"

"They flung him into prison like any common criminal," he replied. "The Spartans, I hear, threw

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their herald down a well, and bade him take earth and water thence to his master Darius."

Cleander, playing in the courtyard, had laughed gleefully at the thought of such a prank, and wished he could have been there to see it. Now he realized that that had been the first stand taken by the Greeks against the claims of the great king.

"But surely," he thought, "if the Spartans were of one mind with us then, they will not fail us now."

And yet, he remembered, the Persian King was not trying to conquer Greece for himself, but to restore Hippias, whose father Peisistratus had ruled in Athens twenty years before. Why did they not want Hippias back? Other words of Archelous came to his mind—times when he had spoken bitterly of the rule of tyrants, contrasting it with the free life of the citizens of Athens. Hippias would put an end to that freedom if he came back.

Suddenly a voice spoke on the other side of the pillar, startling Cleander out of his reverie.

"I tell you it's madness," said the voice. "The Persians have six hundred war vessels besides countless transports. We have perhaps ten thousand men. Miltiades is a fool."

"Hush," said a second voice. "This is no time or place to speak thus of Miltiades. What would you have him do?"

"Do?" spluttered the first speaker. "He should make his peace with Datis and Hippias while there is yet time. No doubt Hippias would be merciful."

"When the Persian host has swallowed up our army as a lion swallows a lamb, then Hippias will

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come to Athens in triumph," said the second voice. "He will have need of officers. If you would hear more, meet me in the first olive garden outside the north gate at moonrise. We will foil the madman yet."

There was a pause, and then Cleander heard their soft footfalls dying away across the square. For a time he sat motionless, terrified to move lest some one should still be there and see how he had been eavesdropping. There was no further sound, however, and at last he plucked up courage to steal across to the next pillar. Once safely behind that, he began to run, and soon turned into one of the narrow lanes that led out of the market-place.

By this time the afternoon sun was throwing long shadows across the streets and squares, and the distant peaks of Mount Hymettus stood out boldly against the pale blue of the sky. Soon it would be evening, then darkness would fall, and then the moon would rise. And with the rising of the moon somebody would meet somebody else in a certain olive garden to plot against Miltiades and his brave army. Cleander's head was in a whirl, and his cheeks burned with excitement. How dare they go against the will of the people of Athens! How dare they use his father's olive garden for their wicked schemes! They must be stopped, their plans overthrown—but by whom?

Then Cleander remembered the words of Aeschylus, "Only set your heart on Liberty, and she will bring you where you may best serve her cause." Surely nobody could foil the plotting of these conspirators

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but himself. Cleander drew himself up proudly, his fair head back, his shoulders squared. The gods had shown him speedily how he could serve the cause, and he was ready.

Meanwhile he must go home and prepare for the night's adventure, and he turned his steps reluctantly towards his own door. What if his father were angry with him for being out all day without a slave in attendance? Quietly he slipped in at the door and made his way along the few yards of passage to the open courtyard. It was almost the hour for the evening meal, and the whole family had gathered in the courtyard. Agariste, Cleander's mother, reclined on the marble seat, and Eunice and Chlaris sat curled up on the floor beside her.

Agariste was a pretty woman still, plump and fair-skinned, with large blue eyes. She always dressed in pale blue or pale green, because these colours accentuated her fairness and the golden lights in her hair, coiled as it was in a ribbon to match her robe. Chlaris was her mother's child, plump and merry, with honey-coloured plaits swinging round her shoulders. Eunice alone of the three children took after her father. Her delicate oval face was framed in curls of dark hair that seemed to shadow her thoughtful dark eyes. She was her father's favourite, and had persuaded him to let her learn to read and write, though her mother said it made her careless and forgetful in her household duties. She sat now watching her father as he strolled up and down the courtyard, a frown of anxiety on his face.

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"Here he is. Here he is," cried the girls as Cleander came in, and Archelous turned to greet the truant.

"Where have you been, my son?" he demanded, but his voice, though grave, was not angry, and Cleander answered boldly.

"I've been in the market-place, Father," he said. "I went to see what was happening. I saw the soldiers marching, and Pheidippides coming back from Sparta, and the generals and everything."

His eyes shone with delight at the memory of all the wonderful things he had seen that day.

"You had no right to go out without Xanthias," said Agariste severely. "Don't you realize that you deserve to be punished?"

Cleander's face fell and he stood silent until his father spoke again.

"And do you understand what you have seen, my son?" he asked.

"Oh yes," cried the boy quickly, "indeed I do. The people of Athens are a free people, and Hippias has come with Persians to help him to take their freedom from them. But we would rather die than be enslaved, even if the Spartans never come to help us."

"You are right, boy," Archelous nodded approvingly. "Life without freedom is not worthy of the name. Let me see you growing into a brave man, jealous to defend the freedom of your country, honourable in discharging the duties that freedom brings with it, and I shall be satisfied. Now come to dinner, for you must be hungry."

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Dusk had fallen by the time the meal was finished, and the oil lamps on their bronze pedestals were lighted, shedding a soft glow through the room. Cleander could hardly eat for anxiety. His mind was busy with the problem how to slip out of the house unnoticed, how to escape through the city gate and so reach the olive garden before moonrise. When the meal was over Archelous rose to leave the room.

"Bid the slaves leave the small side door open for me," he told his wife. "There is a lot of business to attend to and I may be delayed."

Cleander's heart leapt at the words. His way of escape was so far assured. He made no protest when his mother ordered him off to bed.

"Wandering in the streets alone all day like a vagabond," she scolded, "you must surely be tired by this time."

Being the only son of the house, Cleander had a room to himself, though Xanthias, the slave-tutor, slept on the veranda outside his door. That night, however, Xanthias had gone with Archelous, and as soon as the rest of the household had scattered to their own quarters, the way was clear for the conspirator.

Silently Cleander wrapped himself in a dark cloak and slipped out into the courtyard. Flattening himself against the wall he crept round the veranda to where, opposite his own room, the slaves' quarters and the side door opened off it. Voices and muffled laughter sounded from beyond the dividing wall, but no one was in sight, and he slipped into the passage

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leading to the side door. Suddenly the curtain that shut off the slaves' quarters was lifted, and against the light beyond Cleander saw the figure of a girl. The light fell full on his face, and for a moment they stared at one another. Then the curtain dropped without a sound.

Cleander drew a deep breath. He had recognized Acte, the daughter of Strephon the steward, a girl the same age as himself, and the constant playmate of her master's three children. There was no doubt that she had recognized him, but she was a loyal friend and could be trusted not to betray him. Another few yards and he had reached the side door and passed noiselessly out into the narrow lane beyond. Suddenly it occurred to him that if Archelous came home before he did the door would be locked, and he would have no way of getting in again. That was in the care of the gods, however, and he moved away without hesitation.

Stumbling and tripping over the débris in the lane, Cleander crept along slowly to the corner. Then another lane and a wider street, all as dark as the jaws of a wolf. At the end of the second street the houses opened out and the broad highway swept past to the city wall and the great gate. This was not so dark, for torches were burning here and there. Occasionally a group of men passed, the torches in their hands flaring fitfully, chasing shadows over the roadway and the houses like dim banners fluttering in the breeze. Keeping to the shadows, Cleander reached the gateway and crouched behind the guardhouse.

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The gate was shut, and before it stood a soldier fully armed. Sometimes he exchanged a word or two with the watchman on the wall; sometimes a passer-by would come forward and speak to him in low, anxious tones. Shivering with excitement, Cleander racked his brain to think of some way of getting through the gate, but none could he devise. Suddenly the watchman gave a shout.

"A runner," he cried, "a messenger from the army. Open the gate."

At his cry several groups of men came running forward, and with their help the great bars were lifted out of their sockets. Slowly the gate swung open.

"News, news," shouted the messenger, and all crowded round him intent to hear. "A thousand men from Plataea have joined our army and marched with us to Marathon."

Instantly a babel of talk broke out, and under cover of the noise and confusion Cleander glided from his hiding-place and through the open gate, his heart beating like a hammer with excitement and joy. A thousand Plataeans! Their lives too, perhaps, depended on his success.

From the city gate to the olive garden was barely half a mile, and every step of the road was familiar to the boy now hurrying along it, picking his way by the faint light of the stars. It was the season of the olive harvest, and every day for weeks past the city boys had come romping out after lessons to help the slaves to shake down the firm green fruit. The gardens of Archelous were the nearest to the city,

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and also the biggest. As he sped along Cleander began to wonder how in all that expanse of trees he would find the conspirators.

"The gods have brought me thus far," he told himself. "Surely they will guide me farther."

The wall of the garden being built of rough brick, there was nothing to prevent a sturdy boy from climbing over it and dropping lightly on the other side. There was no time to be lost, for already the moon was visible above the horizon, silvering the tops of the trees, though their boles still stood in shadow. Picking himself up, Cleander was about to move forward when the sound of voices brought him to a stand. Trembling, he flattened himself against the trunk of the nearest tree.

"Here you are at last," grumbled a voice. "I thought you would never come. What kept you?"

"I stopped to hear some news," was the reply. "A runner from the army brought word of reinforcements. A thousand Plataeans have joined Miltiades."

The first speaker laughed scornfully. "A thousand fools," he mocked. "A drop in the bucket. The Persian dragon will swallow them as easily as the rest."

"Well, and what is your plan?" asked the other.

"Listen carefully. There are many in Athens who realize the folly of opposing the Persians, but dared not say so while the army remained in the city. Now the way is clear, however, and all is in train. When our citizen soldiers see the hosts of the Persians, numberless as the stars above us, they will hesitate and delay the battle. Meanwhile we

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shall send men down to the Bay of Phalerum to welcome the Persian fleet, while others of us prepare to seize the city on Hippias's behalf. A messenger has carried our terms to Datis and Hippias, and when all is ready a shield will be uplifted on Mount Pentelicon to summon our allies. One half of the Persian armament will easily deal with our foolhardy warriors, and the other, sailing round to Phalerum, will be in possession of Athens before another moonrise."

"This is well planned," commented the second conspirator. "And what is my part in this fine comedy—or is it tragedy?"

"We are not all men of wealth and ability," was the suave reply. "Some such, however, we must have to give a fitting welcome to the new King. How would it please you to be our spokesman, the first to offer homage to the son of Peisistratus on his restoration?"

There was silence for a moment before the other replied. At last he spoke firmly.

"I accept," he said. "I will speak for you before Hippias."

"Good," said his companion, "then come this way. I have others waiting to meet you and to arrange the final details. Did you leave the ladder against the wall? We must throw it down where it was lying before."

A moment later there was a dull thud as the ladder fell back into the grass, and the voices of the two men died away in the distance.

CHAPTER III

MARATHON

WHEN silence had fallen on the garden again Cleander came out from his hiding-place. He was shivering a little, and his knees felt suddenly weak, so he sat down on the grass to consider what he had heard. News of the plot must be carried to Miltiades at once, that at least was clear. And there was no one to carry it but himself. How he wished that Pheidippides were there with his swift stride, to carry the news to Marathon; or Aeschylus to go back into the city and confound the conspirators before all the people; or even Demetrius to keep him company. But none of these was near, so he must just set his mind to the task and go alone.

Getting up from the grass, the boy quickly gathered a handful of ripe olives and thrust them into the folds of his tunic to sustain him on his twenty-mile journey. Then, feeling about among the tree trunks, he found the ladder that the plotters had used, and in another minute he was safely over the wall and out in the dusty road again.

By this time the moon was riding high in the clear sky, and there was no difficulty in seeing the white

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road winding away across the plain. Cleander tied his sandals more firmly, wrapped his cloak about him, and set off at a steady jog-trot. An owl hooting in a neighbouring tree startled him, and in a distant spinney a fox barked sharply, but there was no human sound to relieve the loneliness. Endlessly the white road unwound like a ribbon before him, and vanished into the darkness behind. 3057

Ahead the hills loomed up, and after some hours he was climbing steadily on a track overshadowed by trees so tall and thick that the moon's rays hardly penetrated their branches. Cleander cast frightened glances into the black depths on each side, expecting every minute to see a wolf or bear come slinking through the undergrowth. It seemed to him that he could hear nothing now but the desperate throbbing of his own heart. His legs moved sluggishly, as if a heavy stone hung on each foot. At last the forest opened out into a little valley, but just as he passed out of the shadow of the trees Cleander's foot caught in an outlying root. Too weary to save himself, he fell headlong, rolling off the road on to the grass at the edge. 1455

Shaken and exhausted, Cleander lay still. The relief of relaxing his aching limbs was so great that for a little while nothing else mattered. After a time, however, the memory of his errand returned to him, and with it the thought of the people of Athens, unwarned and undefended, falling an easy prey to the savage Persian hordes. Yet even so, the very thought of forcing himself to go on brought tears to his eyes.

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Suddenly in the stillness a new sound caught his ear. He stiffened with terror, sure that at last the wild beasts of the forest had tracked him down. But no. After a few seconds he recognized it. It was unmistakably the sound of a horse cropping the lush grasses of the valley. No sooner had he realized this than energy returned, and he jumped to his feet again. Sure enough, a few yards away, a pony of the wild Thessalian breed moved quietly towards him, nibbling the grass leisurely as it came.

But where was the rider? Cleander, seeing the pony saddled and bridled, looked round anxiously, but there was no one in sight. Slowly he went towards the animal, stretching out his hand and speaking softly to it. How thankful he felt now that his father, having been in the cavalry himself, had insisted on his son learning to ride. The animal seemed perfectly quiet, allowing him to catch its bridle and lead it towards the rippling stream whose waters made the valley so green.

At the water's edge, however, Cleander found the explanation of the pony's presence. The moonlight shone clear and white on the face of a man who lay on the bank of the stream, one hand thrown out and trailing in the cool water. Stooping over him, Cleander saw the blood-stained tunic, the broken arrow-head in his side, and guessed the rest. Some traitor he must have been—perhaps the messenger to Datis from the conspirators in Athens—and as he fled past the Greek camp a sentry had let fly an arrow. Wounded, he had struggled on, till here, thinking himself safe from pursuit, he had dismounted

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to drink and dress his wound. But death had been too quick for him.

Cleander shivered and looked around fearfully, then hastily climbed on the pony's back and set his head for Marathon.

Dawn found them still pressing on, and when the sun leapt up out of the blue Aegean the two armies lay spread out at their feet. Checking the pony, Cleander gazed across the plain with eyes wide and dark with weariness. On the horizon, drawn up along the beach, the Persian galleys formed an unbroken line for miles along the sand. Black against the rising sun they rose like a strong rampart, and before them, as far as the eye could see, stretched the tents and camp-fires of the Persian army. Gold-tipped banner-poles flashed in the morning sun; scarlet and gold, purple and blue, the tents and banners shone in gorgeous confusion. From the camp rose the hum of talk and laughter, neighing of horses, clatter of arms and tramp of feet, blended by distance into an indistinguishable murmur. Over all hung a faint blue veil of vapour, slowly drifting aside before the morning breeze.

Almost at Cleander's feet by comparison stretched the camp of the Athenian army. Keenly the boy scanned the tents, looking for the headquarters of Miltiades. As he watched he became aware suddenly of a bustle and stir in the camp, of men running hither and thither, shouts of officers, and clang of shield and spear. For a moment he was puzzled. Then suddenly the meaning of this activity dawned on him.

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"They're going to fight," he cried aloud. "What shall I do? They are going to fight and I'm too late to warn them."

Tears of bitter disappointment rose unheeded to his eyes. All his effort, all his weariness and fears and determination, all had been wasted. The Athenian army would be wiped out, and there would be no one to save the city from the traitors and their allies. He was too late.

Meanwhile both armies were at last drawn up in battle array. Suddenly a great shout rose from the ranks of the Greeks. It was the pæan, or war-song, with which they always advanced into battle, and with one accord the long line moved forward at a steady run towards the waiting ranks of the Persians.

Dashing the tears from his eyes, Cleander watched with wondering gaze the charging army, now almost lost to sight in a cloud of dust. Then a crash, like the fall of a hundred forest giants, told him that the two armies had met, and the roar of battle filled the air, even to where Cleander sat. Thicker and thicker rose the clouds of dust, enveloping the struggling armies, drifting hither and thither as the wind blew or the battle shifted.

What was happening within that dusky veil could not be seen, but suddenly Cleander realized that something new was taking place. The solid wall of ships that at sunrise had been unbroken now began to break. Here and there along the line a galley pushed out to sea, and the sunshine streamed through the gap she had left in the line. One after another, galley after galley pushed off, till the bay was black

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with their moving shapes, and the rampart on the beach was almost gone.

Wildly Cleander waved his arms in the air, shouting to the rocks and woods around.

"They are beaten. They are fleeing. The Athenians have beaten them. O may the gods be thanked! Surely they must have fought for us this day."

Urging the tired pony to a trot, he made his way down the hill slopes until at last he reached the plain and the edge of the battlefield. There he left his tired mount, and set off on foot in search of Miltiades. Wide-eyed and trembling, he threaded his way among the heaps of dead and wounded. A lump in his throat seemed to choke him, and a terrible sickness assailed him as he saw the havoc that spear and sword had wrought among those men, but lately so proud in their strength and courage. Steadfastly he struggled on, however, to where the main body of the Athenian army was gathered on the beach, watching the retreating ships.

"Where is Miltiades?" he demanded, but the soldiers turned away without listening. Vainly he went from one to another. No one had time to listen to his question, or to wonder how this young lad had found his way into such a fierce battle.

Through the camp of the Persians he passed, where already the victors were throwing out spoil of jewels and rich garments, stores and equipment, beyond their wildest dreams. At last he felt the sea-sand under his feet, and there before him was a familiar figure.

"Aeschylus!" he cried, "O Aeschylus, you must

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help me!" And he darted forward and seized the soldier by the arm.

This was a different man from the genial peace-maker of the market-place. His armour was all dented with blows and spattered with blood, and his face grey with dust and streaked with sweat. His brows were drawn down, too, and his eyes dark with pain and grief as he stood leaning on a long spear.

Looking down, Cleander saw that a young man lay at his feet—the same young man who had summoned him so gaily to come and hear Pheidippides make his report. He too was almost unrecognizable. He had been foremost in the attack on the ships, had grasped the stern-post of a galley, only to have his hands hacked off. Then as he fell the battle raged over him, and now he lay dead at his brother's feet.

For a time Cleander stood silent, but at last he gently pulled Aeschylus by the arm.

"Aeschylus," he pleaded, "listen and help me. I must find Miltiades. I must! I must!"

The urgency of his voice at last penetrated the stunned senses of his companion, and Aeschylus looked down and recognized him.

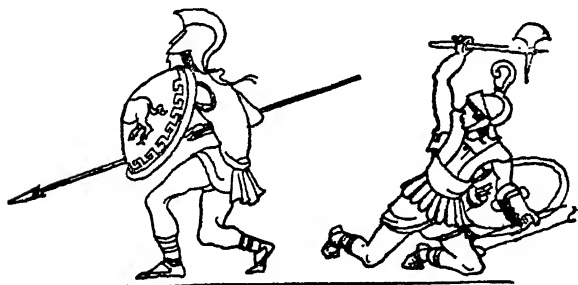
"Why, the little lad from the market-place," he exclaimed. "How came you here, boy, in this place of death and suffering?"

"I know of a plot, Aeschylus," replied Cleander, "a plot to betray Athens to the Persians. Please help me to find Miltiades. Even now it may be too late."

"A plot," mused the soldier. "It may be. Yes, lad, I'll help you."

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'Once more he turned to look on his brother's face. 'Homer has it rightly,' he said, and his voice trembled ever so slightly. " ' Even as are the generations of leaves, such are those likewise of men ; one putteth forth and another ceaseth.' Come, lad."



CHAPTER IV

THE TRAITORS FOILED

CLEANDER and Aeschylus turned their backs on the seashore and made their way through the ruined camp to the tent which had formerly belonged to Datis, the Persian general. The sentry at the door looked curiously at the pair, but recognized the soldier and allowed them to pass. They came at once into the presence of Miltiades and the other generals. Three of them were missing, for Callimachus, who commanded the right wing of the Athenian army, had been killed in the first onset, and two others had died in the battle round the ships.

Miltiades looked up wearily. "What is your business?" he asked.

"This boy has followed us from Athens," Aeschylus explained, "with some tale of a plot he has discovered. He begs leave to give you his story."

All eyes were turned upon Cleander, and those of more than one man softened as they read the signs of weariness and strain on the boy's face.

"Well, lad," Aeschylus prompted him gently.

"I was sitting in the market-place," stammered Cleander, "and I heard men talking and saying that it was madness to resist the Persians, and that they

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would foil the army yet. And then they said that they would meet in my father's olive garden at moonrise. So I went to the garden and heard them planning to let the Persians into Athens. As soon as all was ready they were to show a shield on Mount Pentelicon and half the Persian fleet would sail round to Phalerum and capture Athens."

One of the younger generals sprang to his feet.

"By the gods, Miltiades," he exclaimed, "there may be something in this youngster's story. Did we not notice that some of the Persian fleet seemed to be heading for Cape Sunium? That is not the direction in which to make for Persia."

Another man rose silently and left the room. Miltiades turned again to Cleander.

"Who were these men you heard talking?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir," replied the boy. "In the market-place they were hidden from me by a pillar, and in the olive garden it was dark. Besides, I was afraid they might see me, so I kept in hiding."

"Did you tell any one else what you had heard?" asked the serious-looking general whom Demetrius had called Aristeides.

"No, sir," was the answer. "I waited to hear what the plot would be, and then there was no time to go back for help."

"How did you get here, boy?" asked his neighbour, Themistocles.

"First I walked, and then I found a pony, and the rider was dead, so I took the beast and rode the rest of the way."

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Miltiades spoke again, and his voice was very kindly.

"You have done a great service to your country to-day, my lad," he said. "Now tell me, when did you eat last?"

For the first time since he found himself within sight of the battlefield, Cleander became conscious of his overpowering weariness. His lip trembled a little and he clenched his fists to keep himself from breaking down before all these great men.

"I took some olives with me on the road," he said.

The general turned to Aeschylus. "See him fed, friend," he commanded, "and then we must consider——"

But he got no further, for the man who had left the tent suddenly burst in upon them.

"The shield," he shouted, "the shield on Mount Pentelicon. I have seen it lifted and flashing in the sun. The traitors are ready and Athens is doomed."

"Never," was the steady answer. "Fellow generals, let us not stay idly gloating over our victory. Our city is in danger, our dear ones undefended. Let us leave a small guard here to gather together our sacred dead, but the rest of us must fling off wounds and weariness and march back without delay to the defence of Athens."

A rousing cheer was his reply, and as Aeschylus led Cleander away he saw each man snatch up his arms and prepare to rally his company for the return march.

Not all the tents of the invaders had been over-

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thrown and despoiled, and to one of those still standing Aeschylus now led the way. Sumptuous though it was, the fittings were less extravagant than those of the general's tent from which they had come. The tent-pole here was of polished cedar, but not so splendid as the ebony inlaid with silver that supported the other. Here, too, though the hangings were of scarlet and Tyrian purple, there were none of those coverlets of cloth of gold which had astonished the eyes of the victors, accustomed as they were to the simple decorations of a Greek home.

Food was quickly set before Cleander, wheaten cakes and honey, milk and cheese, and as a special treat a roasted fowl, rescued from the oven where the Persian cook had left it when he fled to the ships. Even as he ate, however, Cleander's head nodded, and when he had finished he was only too glad to drop down on a pile of cushions, to sink at once into the heavy dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

So it happened that he did not hear the trumpets sounding for the march, nor the tramp of feet as the army moved off southwards again. He did not hear the voices of Miltiades and Aeschylus as they stood over his improvised bed.

"He is a good lad," said the younger man, "and will soon learn the lessons of freedom and true citizenship."

"I know his father," was the reply, "a sound and sober citizen; but not one to suggest that he would produce a hero for Athens. He will be a thankful man when we bring him news of the boy's safety."

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The sun was setting when at last Cleander opened his eyes. Slowly his gaze travelled round the tent, resting a moment on each unfamiliar object, trying to recall how he came there. At last he found himself looking at a young man who sat by the door of the tent, darkly outlined against the golden evening sky. Cleander sat up abruptly, memory rushing back to him.

"Where is Aeschylus?" he demanded. "Where are all the others? It must be late, for the sun is setting. Surely it is time we started for Athens?"

The young man turned round smiling. He was dressed in the plain tunic of a slave and carried no arms, but there was a look of breeding in the set of his handsome head, and his eyes met Cleander's frankly.

"Good, you have wakened at last," he said. "By the gods, how a youngster can sleep. You moved no more than the sleepers outside there who will never move again."

"But where is every one?" urged Cleander, "and who are you?"

"I am Syrion, Miltiades' charioteer," was the answer. "The others are gone. They left before the sun had passed the zenith and are now well on their way to Athens. Miltiades left me here to guard you, and to bring you back to Athens in his chariot *whenever* you should wake."

He brought more wheaten bread and milk to the boy's side, and watched with amusement as he eagerly ate and drank.

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"You're a brave boy," he commented at last, "coming all that road in the dark by yourself."

"O no," Cleander assured him, "I'm not brave really. Most of the time I was terrified, until I got too tired to care."

"Why did you do it?" asked Syron curiously.

"Why?" replied Cleander. "Well, I suppose because Athens was in danger and I knew it, and how could I do anything else but try to bring some one to the rescue?"

"What do you care for Athens, a boy like you?" asked the slave.

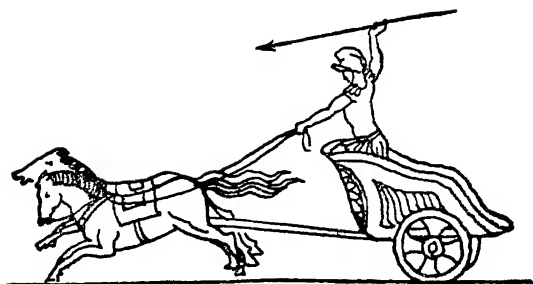
"Oh, but I do care for Athens," cried Cleander quickly, "for Athens and for Greece. They are the home of freedom and learning and beauty, and must never be enslaved by the Persians."

He spoke with a sudden passionate conviction that seemed to well up in him, surprising even himself, and the slave was silent.

When the food had disappeared the young man led the way out of the tent and across the field to where the chariot of Miltiades stood waiting. The soft golden light of evening fell like a benediction over the distant mountains, and on the calm, unruffled waters of the bay. It fell, too, in a glow of pity over that crowded plain, where among the Persian hordes the guard were seeking out the Athenian dead, carrying them reverently to one side, to receive the due rites of burial and a fitting memorial.

Cleander, wrapped in his cloak, snuggled in the bottom of the chariot, and in a few minutes they were at the edge of the plain and bumping over the

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Greek chariot.

rutted road that led round the foot of the hills to Athens.

It was a longer route than the one by which Cleander had come, but the only one for a chariot to take. In the west the evening sky flamed in gold and rose, and against it the mountains stood up black and clear as though cut out of ebony. Gradually the sky paled; a purple haze gathered round the mountains, darkening into grey and then to black as night fell swiftly.

When all was dark, Syrion brought the chariot to a standstill at the side of the road.

"We'll have to wait here now until the moon rises," he explained. "This road is so full of holes that I daren't take the horses over it in the dark. There would be the whip for me if either of them came to any harm."

Cleander uncurled his stiff limbs and climbed out of the chariot. After all that bumping and shaking on the hard floor it was pleasant to stretch his limbs,

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to relax on the soft grass and look up steadily into the starry sky.

"Do you know the names of the stars, Syrion?" he asked.

"Not I," laughed the slave. "I've more to do, I can tell you, than sit about star-gazing."

"I wish I knew their names," sighed the boy. "In some of the old tales our teacher tells us, it says that the gods took the souls of men and women and set them as stars in the heavens. Only the other day we heard of Perseus and Andromeda. Some day I must learn which stars have names and how to recognize them."

Syrion yawned and stretched himself out beside the chariot.

"The stars are too far away to interest me," he laughed. "Shut your eyes and sleep for an hour. By that time the moon will have risen and we can go on again."

It seemed to Cleander only the twinkling of an eye till he was wakened by his companion shaking him by the shoulder. Rubbing his eyes, he sat up and saw the moon already high in the heavens, and the chariot and horses standing in the middle of the road, harnessed and ready to set off. As he rose sleepily to his feet Syrion's fingers suddenly gripped his arm.

"Hist!" he whispered, "some one is coming from Marathon. I hear galloping hoofs."

Wide awake at once, Cleander listened intently and soon distinguished the rhythmic beat of a horse's feet on the road behind them. Rapidly it grew louder,

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and suddenly, round a bend in the road, horse and rider swept into view. With a warning shout Syrion sprang towards them, and at the same moment the rider caught sight of the chariot standing full in his path and reined his horse back almost on its haunches. The charioteer ran forward and laid his hand on the bridle of the new-comer to lead him past the obstacle, but a muffled voice stopped him. A heavy cloak was flung round the stranger's shoulders, one end concealing half his face. Above the folds a pair of keen eyes flashed angrily.

"Fool," he shouted. "What do you mean by thus blocking the road? You shall pay for it if my horse is injured."

Syrion ran a practised hand over the horse's limbs and spoke respectfully but firmly.

"There is no hurt to the horse, noble sir," he said, "and with the moon so bright the chariot was plain to be seen by any one who came at a pace less headlong than yours."

"Insolent!" rapped out the stranger. "Would you bandy words with me? I have an urgent message for Miltiades, and you stand there babbling of the moon. Stand back."

But the charioteer stood firm.

"You are on the wrong road, sir," he remonstrated. "Miltiades marches by the mountain road, and on your horse you could overtake him easily if you turn along the bridle path back yonder."

The stranger made no reply. Instead, lifting his heavy riding whip, he struck the slave a fierce blow on the forearm, so that he dropped the bridle with a

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cry of pain. In the same instant the horse bounded forward past the chariot, and soon disappeared along the road to Athens.

"Into the chariot, boy," shouted Syrion. "Be quick, be quick! The man is a spy, going to warn the traitors in Athens that their plot is discovered. I'm certain of it. We must overtake him at all costs."

Hustling Cleander into the chariot, he sprang in after him, snatching up the reins, and with whip and voice urging the horses, fresh after their rest, to a furious gallop. Rattling and shaking, the chariot bounced along the road behind the flying hooves of the horses, Syrion yelling encouragement. Cleander, bruised and buffeted, clung grimly to his hold on the chariot rail, expecting every moment to be flung clean over the side.

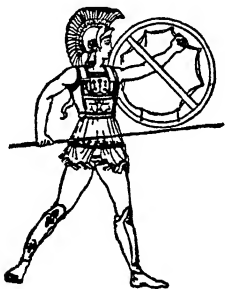
A wilder bump than before, a grinding crash, and the chariot slewed round, toppled over and lay still, the pole broken from the axle. The frightened horses hardly checked their pace, but sped on more swiftly than ever, freed from the cumbersome weight of the chariot at their heels. The noise of their hoof-beats died away in the distance as first one and then a second forlorn figure dragged itself from under the wreckage. The chariot, built lightly of wood, had crumpled up, and except for a few extra bruises and cuts, had done little harm to either of the occupants.

Syrion, rubbing his head, gazed ruefully along the road, where the noise of the chase had already died away. Cleander, too shaken to think, sat heavily on

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the broken wheel. At last the charioteer pulled himself together.

"There's nothing else for it, lad," he sighed. "From here to Athens we must make what speed we can on foot. I'll suffer for this and no mistake. O well, let's get started."



CHAPTER V

BACK IN ATHENS

It was a weary and crestfallen couple who trudged along the road to Athens under the morning sun. The road wound across a plain, and on each side stretched cornfields, yellow with stubble; for the harvest was already gathered into barn and rickyard. Here and there an orchard broke the level, and when the trees grew near the road their shade fell gratefully on the travellers. In the distance the grey-green of the olive gardens welcomed them, and beyond rose the Acropolis, its temples gleaming white against the clear blue sky.

Cleander and Syrion plodded on silently. The slave, indeed, looked too dazed for speech. A lump as big as a hen's egg on his forehead was already turning black, and the eye beneath it was half closed. From a ragged cut on his bare leg a dark trail of dried blood ran down to his foot. Cleander, too, was the worse for his adventures. His cloak was lost, and the blue tunic was torn from one shoulder, showing his arm black and blue from the relentless bumping in the racing chariot. He had lost one sandal, and limped heavily on his bare foot. Neither of them had enough energy left to lift his eyes from the yard of dusty road in front of him.

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Suddenly a chorus of shouts aroused them, and looking up they saw a group of people hurrying towards them.

"Cleander," "My son," "Cleander," shouted the voices, and in a few moments the new-comers were all around them. Foremost of all came Archelous, relief and thankfulness chasing the careworn look from his face as he gathered Cleander in his arms. Over his shoulder peered the brown smiling face of Xanthias.

"Now may the gods be thanked," babbled the slave. "Surely I knew they would protect the young master. Didn't I give him an amulet only two days ago? 'A headstrong youth,' I said to myself, 'he will need all the amulets he can get.' And wasn't I right?"

He was pushed aside then, and in his place Cleander saw the brooding eyes and bearded face of Aeschylus, still crowned by the crested helmet. Behind him were other slaves, and two boys, one of whom was Demetrius. Cleander looked curiously at the other.

"This is my brother Ameinias, Cleander," said Aeschylus. "When he heard of your exploit he would not be put off, but must come out with us in search of you."

During all this eager welcome Syrion stood aside, watching with a mixture of pleasure and envy the fuss that was being made of his young companion. Now, however, Cleander drew him forward.

"Father," he said, "this is Syrion, Miltiades' charioteer. He would have brought me safely to

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'Athens, only we tried to catch a spy who was bringing word to the city about the army. The road was so rough that the chariot broke and the horses got away. Look how he was hurt, too; but he has been helping me when I got tired.'

Archelous looked sternly at the slave.

"You will have to answer to your own master for the loss of his chariot," he said soberly, "but for your care of the boy here I thank you. When I have heard the whole story I shall know how to reward you. Now, back to Athens quickly. Ho, you there, bring up the litter for the boy. We waste time here while his mother fancies him lost or dead."

Kind hands lifted Cleander into the waiting litter, and soon the party was hurrying back to the city, Syron limping in the rear, supported on the strong arm of another slave who had taken pity on his weariness.

Inside the litter Cleander drowsed peacefully, unconscious of the jolting motion, of the curious looks and eager questions of those who met them, hardly conscious even of his mother's tearful welcome as he was carried into the house. Gentle hands bathed his tired body, and rubbed oil on his aching bruises, and at last he was left in his own bed to sleep for as long as he would.

He awoke to find Eunice and Chlaris curled up on the foot of his bed. Seeing him open his eyes, Chlaris clapped her hands gaily.

"O Cleander," she cried, "we thought you would never wake. And we have so much to tell you, haven't we, Eunice?"

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"To be sure," agreed the older sister, "but not if Cleander's too tired. Are you too tired, Cleander?"

"Not me," laughed the boy, sitting bolt upright in bed to show how fresh he was. "But before you begin your story, tell me, were Father and Mother very angry when they found I was gone? And is the army ready to meet the Persians?"

Chlaris laughed shrilly.

"Why, you silly," she said, "the Persians have been and gone. It was yesterday you came back, and you've been sleeping so long you've got all mixed up. The army arrived back before you did, and marched straight to Phalerum. Then in the early morning the fleet came sailing along, and when they saw the soldiers, what do you think they did? Turned round and sailed away again."

She laughed again, and Eunice nodded her head gravely.

"It's true, Cleander," she agreed, "but if you hadn't gone to Marathon the army might not have been back, and there would have been nothing to stop them."

Cleander drew a deep breath.

"I must give special thanks to the gods," he said. "Perhaps I might present my sandal in the Temple of Athene. Mother needn't mind since I lost the other one."

"O," Chlaris shook her golden head, "it's not Athene this time. Haven't you heard how Pheidippides met Pan himself on the road to Sparta?"

Her voice dropped a little and she spoke with awe.

"Pan told Pheidippides that the people of Athens

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had failed to worship him properly, but that he would help them all the same. So I heard father telling mother that a special temple is to be built for him, and there will be a yearly festival in his honour. You'd better offer him your sandal."

"But that's not all," interrupted Eunice. "The Spartans have arrived. What do you think of that?"

"The Spartans!" exclaimed the boy. "Are you sure? How can they be here already?"

"They had to wait for the full moon, you remember," Eunice began. "Well, the moon was full on the night you went away, and they set out the very next morning at dawn. They must have run all the way, I think, but anyway they've just arrived within the last hour. To-morrow they will go out to Marathon to view the battlefield and pay honour to the dead."

"How I wish I could see them," gasped Cleander. "I must get up and go out quickly."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, foolish boy," said a voice, as Agariste parted the curtains and came in, followed by a slave carrying a bowl of steaming soup.

"After two nights and a day on your feet, and with your body all black and blue, I'm going to see to it that you are looked after. Eunice and Chlaris, stop your chattering and run away. And you, Cleander, eat up this soup and then lie down again. You don't move from where you are at least until your father comes home."

When he had emptied the bowl, Cleander found

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himself quite pleased to lie down and sleep again, and another day had dawned before he opened his eyes once more.

"Xanthias," he called sharply, and the old slave appeared at once from behind the curtain.

"Where's Mother?" demanded Cleander. "I must get up now. And why hasn't Father come to see me? Is he angry with me?"

The old man chuckled.

"Your father has been in a score of times," he replied, "but you were so fast asleep you knew nothing. I thought the god of sleep himself must have entered into you, so sound you slept. In any case, there has been such a coming and going, soldiers and generals and all sorts of folk wanting to see the little hero, that your father can hardly get time to eat."

He chuckled again so heartily that he went off into a fit of coughing, and Cleander could get no more out of him. The noise, however, brought Agariste herself to the door.

"What is this?" she demanded. "You are awake, then, Cleander. Well, you may get up and come into the courtyard. It's little enough we'll see of you now, if your father has his way. The gods did us an ill trick when they brought the Spartan to our door."

Cleander looked up curiously at these words, and was surprised to see tears in his mother's eyes. Young as he was, he had already learned to distrust her sudden emotional outbursts, so he merely wondered casually what could be troubling her. She left the

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room without further words, however, and Cleander sprang hastily out of bed.

A wide-lipped basin of clear water stood on the floor, and into this he plunged his face, washing the last traces of sleep and weariness from his eyes. Xanthias stood by to pour the water over his hands and arms, and to hand him the linen towel. A fresh tunic and belt were laid ready for him, and beside them a new shoulder-pin, made of bronze and shaped like a laurel wreath.

"Why, Xanthias," cried the boy, "where did that come from?"

"Ah ha," said the old man proudly, "from Miltiades, no less. See now what favour your fine exploit has brought you."

Cleander flushed with pleasure as he fastened the pin in place. Then he stepped out into the courtyard where Agariste sat at her distaff, the little girls playing quietly at her side. Just at that moment the street door opened, and there was a sound of feet and voices in the passage.

"Yes, Aeschylus," Archelous was saying, "older men than he have had their heads turned by fame. Besides, the time will come when we shall need every soldier we can muster. If you think of sending Ameinias too, I shall be all the better pleased."

The two men entered the courtyard together, and their grave faces softened as they looked at the little group gathered in the shade of the lime tree. Greetings were exchanged, and they sat down on the stools the slaves brought forward. Eagerly Cleander showed his father the new shoulder-pin.

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"Have you seen what Miltiades sent me, father?" he asked. "Isn't it beautiful?"

The two men exchanged glances as they admired the pin. Then, stroking his beard thoughtfully, Archelous drew Cleander to his side.

"These are stirring times we live in, my son," he said, "and no one is prouder than I am of the part you have played in this great deliverance. You acted like a brave and trusty citizen, and Athens owes you a debt of gratitude."

Here Agariste tossed her head and interrupted crossly.

"Gratitude, indeed. Nonsense, I call it, putting such stuff into a boy's head that he goes trapesing about the country alone like that. He might have been killed for all you care."

Archelous made no reply, but when she stopped speaking he continued what he had to say.

"How would you like a trip to Sparta, Cleander?" he asked.

"To Sparta!" gasped Cleander. "I should love that, Father. You know you say the Spartans are the greatest soldiers in the world, and now"—he flashed a look at Aeschylus who smiled understandingly—"I want to be a soldier and fight for Athens. But how could I go to Sparta?"

"With the Spartan force that arrived yesterday there is an old friend of mine named Theasides. He has no son, and he is willing that you should go back with him to Sparta for a year or two. It is my wish that you should have some of that Spartan training that turns out the best soldiers in the world. But

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remember, my son, you will find no freedom among the Spartans. Their watchword is "Discipline." They make the body perfect but neglect the mind. Theirs is a narrow, provincial patriotism which sets the safety of Sparta above the welfare of Hellas. If I send you there, it is only for a short time, and I shall expect you not to forget those ideals of freedom and true citizenship that I have tried to set before you."

Cleander turned to Aeschylus with shining eyes.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "I will never forget your words: 'Set your heart on Liberty and she will set you where you can best serve her cause.' Even in Sparta I will remember them."

Then suddenly his face fell and he turned back to Archelous.

"I wish I needn't go alone, father," he said. "Couldn't Demetrius go too?"

Archelous smiled, though his eyes were grave.

"Demetrius's father has other plans for his son," he replied. "He is a rich man, and one day Demetrius will be rich too."

"Yes, indeed," interrupted Agariste, "only at the last festival the mother of Demetrius went into the Temple before me all loaded down with jewels, and wearing a robe so fine that it positively offended my modesty. Why can't you buy shares in the silver mines instead of sending our only son to Sparta, where most likely he will be starved or beaten to death."

She sobbed aloud at the very thought, and throwing down her distaff, left the courtyard. When she had gone Archelous spoke again.

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“ Aeschylus is going to send his brother Ameinias with you,” he told Cleander. “ You will be good friends and staunch Athenians whatever happens. Now, Eunice, fetch your lyre and sing to us, and we will forget all these excitements for an hour.”

CHAPTER VI

SPARTA

THE years that Cleander spent in Sparta were not unhappy, in spite of the poor food and strict discipline, which included all too frequent floggings, not for any misbehaviour but to teach the boys endurance and indifference to pain. The boys all lived together in a large barrack-like building, and there was ample scope for fun and good-fellowship in that healthy, cheery community. Both Ameinias and Cleander showed great skill in mastering the intricate and rhythmic musical drill which formed a large part of their training, and they entered with zest into all the games and sports in which the Spartan boys delighted. Ameinias won the prize for throwing the discus, and Cleander excelled in all contests of running or jumping. Both learned to swim in the swift-flowing river Eurotas, whose rushing waters flowed down from Mount Taygetus, the lofty rampart that sheltered the Vale of Sparta on the western side.

One thing they did lack—the mental stimulus to which they had been accustomed in Athens. Beyond the obligation to learn by heart some passages from Homer and the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, little attention

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was paid to their mental development. Many of their companions could neither read nor write, and scorned the arts as fitted only for weaklings or slaves.

Fortunately Theasides, their sponsor and guardian, was of a different mind from the majority of his fellow-countrymen. He himself had spent some years in Athens, and had gained some insight into the rich fields of learning which the Athenians were so eager to explore. In his house he would gather a few like-minded friends, and there the boys would listen eagerly as men reasoned of poetry and philosophy, of music and astronomy, of life and death. Sometimes a precious parchment would be unrolled, and the company would listen while the host declaimed the sounding phrases of wisdom or beauty. There Ameinias, flushed with pride, would hear the mighty thunder of his brother's noble verse. There Cleander's eyes would grow dreamy as he listened to the music of the lyre and remembered Eunice's sweet singing.

It was a homely house, the dwelling of Theasides, and one where Cleander and Ameinias soon made themselves at home. Theasides' wife was dead, and he had one daughter, Daphne, a girl of Cleander's own age. Nothing surprised the young Athenians so much as the freedom of the girls in this new home of theirs. Instead of remaining cloistered in their mother's house until they married, as the girls of Athens did, these Spartan maidens moved about freely, even joining in the dancing and games with their brothers. Slim and vigorous, they had all the beauty that comes from an open-air life; fit mothers

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for a race of warriors and athletes. Among them all Daphne bore away the palm, with her supple grace of body and her lovely laughing face, lit up by a pair of bright brown eyes. Between her and Cleander a friendship sprang up second only to the close tie that bound Cleander to his own sister Eunice.

One summer evening, almost four years after the battle of Marathon, Ameinias and Cleander sat side by side on a grassy bank overhanging the pool where they had just been bathing. Those four years had transformed Cleander into a tall lad of sixteen, straight and strong and supple of limb. The golden evening light brought out the rich colour of his sun-tanned skin, glowing from his swim, under which the muscles rippled, as smooth as silk. There were golden lights, too, in the damp curls of his hair, contrasting well with the darker brows and lashes that shaded his blue eyes. There had been silence for some minutes, but now Cleander spoke, as he sat up and began to draw on his tunic.

"Do you feel as restless as I do, Ameinias?" he asked. "It seems to me there's something in the air; a kind of tension or excitement or something. I wish I knew what it was."

Ameinias nodded thoughtfully. He was a year older than Cleander, darker in colouring, and slower in speech and action, unless roused by some strong feeling.

"I know what you mean," he agreed. "Those fellows who came into our dormitory last night were the same. They're all out of school now and enrolled in the Crypteia. They ought to be off on secret

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defence duty. Why are they still hanging about the city? I wonder if there's trouble brewing?"

"Well," mused Cleander, "I did think those helots we passed on our way here looked sullen. There couldn't be a helot rising, could there?"

Both boys looked solemn at the very thought. Once before, the huge subject population of the country had risen against their Spartan masters. People had been massacred in their beds, and the conflict had been fierce and bloody before the Spartans at last got the upper hand.

"I've always thought it was a doubtful business," said Ameinias, "this huge slave population, with only a few Spartans to control them. No wonder they concentrate on becoming good soldiers."

"But it's ridiculous," burst out Cleander. "Such a thing would be impossible in Athens. Can you imagine old Xanthias, or Syrion (you know my father bought him for me when Miltiades died?) or little Acte trying to murder us all in our beds? A slave is almost as well off as a freeman in Athens, and anyway he can always hope to buy his freedom."

"All except those in the silver mines," Ameinias retorted. "They say they're treated worse than animals."

"O well, my father won't have anything to do with them," laughed Cleander. "Perhaps that's why. Come on. It'll soon be dusk, and I'm ready for supper."

Rising, the two boys had just fastened on their sandals and belts when the sound of a heavy body crashing through the undergrowth behind them made

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them both pause. Nearer and nearer it came, until at last a man's figure burst out into the open space where they stood and fell gasping at their feet.

"By Hermes," exclaimed Ameinias, "what kind of traveller is this?"

But Cleander had sprung forward and lifted the stranger to his knees so that the waning light fell full on his face.

"Syrion!" he exclaimed. "How came you here, and why are you running as if for your life?"

"Now may the gods be thanked that I have found you," gasped the slave. "Your noble father has but now arrived from Athens and I was bidden to seek you out and tell you he had come."

Here he paused to gather breath, looking nervously over his shoulder, while the two boys waited impatiently for the rest of his story.

"I came along the road looking for you," he went on at last, "and at the far side of the wood I came to a peasant's hut. I heard voices inside, so I went in to see if they could give me any news of you. It was dark inside the hut, but I could see a group of men gathered in the middle of the floor. They were crouching down, all looking inward at something, and none of them noticed me. I was just going to call out to them, but before I could speak another door opened. Three young men armed with swords and shields sprang in and set upon the group on the floor. For a moment it seemed as if my limbs were turned to water, and I had no strength to move. Then I turned and made off into this wood, and I don't know whether they followed me or not."

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Ameinias and Cleander looked at one another anxiously above his head.

"So it is a rising," said Ameinias at last. "What shall we do?"

"We must get back to the city," said Cleander, knitting his brows. "Here, Ameinias, draw your hunting knife and cut yourself a strong staff from these ash trees. So will I, and so will Syrion. If any one tries to stop us we'll say we are Athenians, and they may let us pass. If not, we must do the best we can."

Three stout staves were soon cut, and by that time Syrion had recovered his breath and his composure, and had tidied his dress. The three set off on the homeward journey. It was almost dark by this time, but already the moon was rising, and the boys, familiar with every nook and cranny of the wood, soon made their way back to the road and turned city-wards.

About a quarter of a mile along the road ahead of them they saw the peasant's hut of which Syrion had spoken, and could just distinguish some figures standing at the door. A stray moonbeam, shining through the trees, caught the hilt of a sword in its thin shaft of light.

"Now, Syrion, march on boldly," whispered Cleander, and the three advanced without a sign of hesitation. As they drew level with the hut a man stepped forward, sword in hand.

"Halt!" he commanded. "Who are you, and what is your business?"

Ameinias, being the elder, replied, "We are the

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Athenian wards of Theasides," he said, "and this is our servant. We have been bathing in the river and are on our way home. Why do you stop us, friend?"

The man hesitated, then came a step nearer, peering at them through the darkness.

"Ay, I know you," he growled at last. "Well, have a care as you go into the city. There have been riots and brawling there this evening—a helot plot discovered, thanks to some of your late schoolfellows. The time was not ripe, though, and we took swift action. Soon they will all be like the carrion in there."

He laughed harshly, pointing his sword towards the hut, then bade them good-night and stepped back into the shadows beside his comrades.

With beating hearts the Athenians walked on, casting uneasy glances round them from time to time, halting now and then to listen for any sounds of disturbance. All was still, however, except for the throaty croaking of the frogs in the near-by marshes, and the hoot of an owl as it brushed past them on silent wings.

As they came nearer the city a low hum became audible, scarcely noticeable at first, but gradually swelling till it could no longer be ignored. It was unquestionably the noise of a great concourse of people, and the boys became anxious.

"Look here, Ameinias," said Cleander at last, "don't let's go back to the school. My father is at Theasides' house, and that's on the outskirts of the city. We can go there instead."

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"That means a flogging in the morning," Ameinias warned him.

"Oh, never mind," cried the younger boy impatiently, "we should be used to that by now. And anyway, if there's a revolt, who knows what will happen in the morning. Come on."

Leaving the main road, they made their way by little winding paths that twisted and turned among the cornfields and vineyards. There was no sign of any of the country people who might normally have been about. The whole countryside had emptied itself into the city, from which the noise of tumult now rose more plainly on the still night air.

Unlike Athens, Sparta had no city wall, and therefore there was no guarded gate for the boys to pass. They made their way by devious paths and little dark lanes until they reached the door of Theasides' house. Being on the outskirts of the city it was still unmolested by the rioters, and at Cleander's knock a frightened slave peered out through the little grill. Seeing who stood outside, he hastily opened the door.

"Come in, come in, young masters," he stammered. "This is an evil time. You are lucky to have reached us safely."

The house was similar to those in Athens, and the slave led the way to the courtyard. Lamps were burning in the roofed arcade that surrounded it, and a tiny flame flickered on the altar in the middle of the courtyard. In the far corner a group of slaves huddled together, and at sight of the new-comers a sigh seemed to pass over them, as a gust of wind

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ruffles a field of grain. Nearer to the door Archelous sat thoughtfully on a couch, while Daphne crouched on a low stool at his feet.

At the sound of feet they both started up and came forward.

"Cleander, my son!" exclaimed Archelous. "The gods be praised. I feared you dead in this turmoil. And you too, Ameinias, and Syryon too. Thanks to the gods indeed that you are safe."

He was interrupted by Daphne, who suddenly ran forward and clasped Cleander's arm.

"My father!" she sobbed. "O Cleander, have you seen my father? He went out into the street many hours ago and has not come back."

Loosening her hold, she wrung her hands together pitifully, her tear-reddened eyes still searching Cleander's face. Tenderly they reassured her and led her back to her seat.

"Why, Daphne," Cleander remonstrated, "of course he is safe. The rioters aren't armed, and we met a man who told us that the helots were surprised and overpowered almost at once. Besides, he wouldn't like to see you crying so. He would say that wasn't like a Spartan."

With rather a wan smile Daphne sat down again, but her restless fingers twining and untwining showed how great was the restraint she put upon herself. Sitting down beside her, Archelous questioned the two boys about what they had seen and heard. His face was grave, and at every sound in the street outside he fell silent, listening intently for any sign of Theasides' return.

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Gradually the noise and hum of the tumult in the city died down. The lamps flickered in the tiny breeze that heralded the new day. Far off a cock crowed, thin and clear, and the faint pearly light of the dawn crept into the courtyard.

Suddenly there was a sound of trampling feet and a thunderous knock at the door. Startled, the whole household sprang to life and hastened to answer that imperative summons. Slow footsteps sounded in the flagged passage, and a sad procession entered the courtyard. In the centre, on a shield, lay Theasides, his face white as death, his eyes closed. Round him stood a group of soldiers, his personal attendant at their head.

With a choking cry Daphne flung herself on her knees beside the still figure, clasping one limp hand in her own.

Archelous stepped forward. "What happened?" he asked. "Is he dead?"

"He would not seek safety, sir," the soldier answered sorrowfully. "I begged him to leave the fighting to younger men, but he would not. He is sore wounded. Death is close at hand."

"Bring wine," commanded Archelous, and he moistened the wounded man's lips and forced a little between his teeth. Theasides opened his eyes slowly. His glance fell first on Daphne as she knelt beside him. With an effort he lifted his hand and stroked her cheek. Then he looked up at Archelous, and his lips moved.

"She is all I have, friend," he whispered; "more precious to me than all besides. I have none to

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whose care I can entrust her. Will you accept this trust? Will you care for her for me?"

There were tears in Archelous' eyes as he leaned down to hear the whispered words.

"She shall be as our own daughter to my wife and me," he promised. "I swear by all the gods that I will faithfully discharge this trust."

The pale lips parted in a smile of content, and with a last whispered blessing to the kneeling girl, Theasides closed his eyes in death.

From among the crowding slaves, Daphne's old nurse, Chloe, came forward and led her away, silent now and stunned with grief. When she had gone, Archelous turned to the two boys who stood sorrowfully watching.

"I had come to take you back to Athens, lads," he said, "and this settles it. We feel, both Aeschylus and I, that you have had long enough of Spartan discipline, and we want you at home again. We shall wait only for the funeral rites of our good friend, and then we shall take Daphne with us and return to Athens. Now come, for we must speak to the priests about the funeral rites, and I must arrange to get the legal wardship of this poor maid."

CHAPTER VII

ATHENS AGAIN

"WELL, I declare, this is too bad of your father, bringing a strange girl to the house without ever a word to me. And not even a modest Athenian girl at that. O I've heard of these Spartan hussies, bold and forward, mixing shamelessly with the boys instead of staying decently at home."

Agariste dropped her husband's letter and threw herself back petulantly on her cushions. She was in her favourite place under the lime-tree in the courtyard, and beside her Eunice plied her spindle with deft fingers. From the long dining-room the notes of a flute could be heard, for Chlaris and some of her friends were having a music lesson. On the ridge of the roof the doves kept up a murmurous crooning as they preened themselves in the sun.

Eunice spoke soothingly to her mother.

"If she weren't a nice girl, Mother, I'm sure Father would never bring her into our home. And if she's young she will surely settle into our ways quite easily. Where will she sleep?"

"That's another thing," complained Agariste. "There is no room for another bed in your room, so I shall have to give her Cleander's and make one of the store-rooms into a bedroom for him."

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"When will they arrive?" was Eunice's next question.

"How can I tell?" was the peevish answer. "Your father sent the letter by a runner, and he has gone off for a meal."

She clapped her hands and a slave appeared.

"Bid the runner from your master come to me," she commanded.

In a few moments the man appeared, furtively wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. In answer to the mistress's questions he bowed humbly.

"My master sent me forward from Megara, mistress," he said, "to tell you he will be here before the sun sets."

"To-day!" cried Agariste, starting up from her couch. "Fool, why did you not tell me that first. How can I prepare a welcome at such short notice? Call Xanthias and Strephon, and you, Eunice, go see the cook and have a meal prepared. Hurry, now; there's not a moment to waste."

In a flutter of excitement mistress and maids set to work to prepare for the travellers. The slaves worked willingly, for besides having a wholesome fear of their mistress, they were all devoted to their master. There was real affection, too, for Cleander, and rejoicing at his return from exile, mixed with not a little curiosity to see the Spartan girl of whose coming the runner had told them.

Soon the beds were made up with fine coverlets of new linen, and the tall pitchers in each room were filled with fresh water. In the kitchen the fire burned brightly under the many cooking-pots, and the cook's

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face grew redder and redder as she stooped over the hearth or hustled her helpers about their business. At last all was in train, and the household settled down to wait the arrival.

The sky was still bright, but the courtyard was all in shadow when the trampling of feet in the street outside gave notice of their coming. The outer door was opened by the porter, and the whole party trooped in, Archelous leading the way.

"Welcome home, welcome home," cried the girls, and the slaves cheered heartily. Archelous kissed his wife and daughters, then turned to draw forward the stranger, who stood close behind him.

"Agariste," he said, "this is Daphne, the maiden of whom I told you. Receive her as your own daughter and welcome her for my sake and her own."

The travelling veil that covered Daphne's head fell back as she lifted her eyes to Agariste's face. Something in the wistful droop of her lip or the clear innocence of her gaze touched the older woman's heart and melted her hostility.

"More than welcome, my dear," she said, kissing the girl warmly. "This is your home as long as you will stay with us. Eunice and Chlaris, welcome this stranger as you would a sister."

Just then, however, Cleander stepped forward and in the joy and excitement of welcoming him Daphne was for the moment forgotten. All the household crowded round, admiring his height, his fine bronzed skin, his handsome curly head, and the tunic of soft blue linen with its red and gold border.

"A fine young man," declared old Xanthias, "as fine

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a young man as I could wish to see. Many's the time I've pictured him like this when I watched him sitting in the schoolroom. Ay, I can be proud of him now."

"How tall you are, Cleander," laughed Chlaris, standing on tiptoe beside him. "I'm so glad you've come home. Now you must make a name for yourself at the Games, so that I can boast about you to the other girls."

Eunice laughed too. "Chlaris is longing for the day when you'll win the four-horse chariot race, Cleander," she explained. "But I want to hear all about Sparta and what you learned there."

Talking and laughing the group gradually broke up, the girls carrying off Daphne to her room, the slaves going back to their own quarters, while Arche-lous and Cleander went off to the bath-house to rid themselves of the dust and stains of travel.

When night fell, guests began to arrive for the feast of welcome that had been arranged. In the long dining-room garlands and sprays of flowers decorated the walls, and the couches were laid round the room, each with its embroidered cover and silken cushions. As each guest arrived, two slaves came running with water in earthenware pitchers to bathe his hands, while another followed with garlands in a wicker basket from which the guest could choose his coronet of flowers. The lamps burned brightly on their bronze pedestals.

Among the first arrivals were Aeschylus and Ameinias. The former was now a poet of fame, but his manner had still the unstudied dignity that had marked him out from the crowd when first Cleander

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met him. His pride and delight in Ameinias showed clearly every time his eyes rested on the boy. Couches had been placed for Ameinias and Cleander at Archelous's left hand, as those for whom the feast was being given, and they greeted one another eagerly.

"This is better than black soup in the school dining-room," chuckled Cleander.

"I should think so," retorted Ameinias; "and now we can speak freely about all the things we care for, and not have the class-captain hammering us for a pair of Athenian milksops."

"Why, here's Demetrius," exclaimed Cleander a moment later as a tall young man entered the room. He wore the chlamys, or pointed cloak, which was the uniform of an Athenian officer, and had a gold fillet on his head, a gold ring on his finger. He spoke in a soft, affected voice, and eyed the two younger boys with great superiority.

"Well, Cleander," he drawled at last, "so you've come home again. I must say you've thriven well on the Spartan system. How did you like living in their dirt and supping their abominable soup day after day? They tell me that one spoonful of that soup is enough to explain why the Spartans don't fear death."

He laughed lightly, and Cleander felt himself reddening with anger. Remembering his place as host, however, he bit back a quick retort and greeted his old school-fellow courteously.

"I see you're enrolled in the Epheboi," he said, as Demetrius took his place on the couch beyond Ameinias. "That must be a grand life."

"Not too bad," was the reply. "At least, praise

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the gods, they treat us as gentlemen, and not as slaves or schoolboys, like the Spartan army. They tell me even their generals have spies always at their elbows, because they can't be trusted." 249.51.

"That's a lie," said Ameinias quietly. m. 11 c

Demetrius threw back his head in a peal of laughter. "By Athene, they've made you as crisp-tongued as themselves," he declared. "Archelous rescued you not a moment too soon." 14801 16834

He was interrupted by the arrival of another guest whom the slaves ushered forward to the seat of honour at Archelous' right hand. He was a tall man with dark hair and beard, both carefully curled, and with flashing blue eyes under dark brows. As he came up the room he threw a wave of greeting to one guest, a smile to another, a careless nod to a third. Watching the easy, graceful movements, Cleander had a sudden vision of a sun-drenched market-place and a man who strolled up to the Council Hall, one arm round the shoulder of his dearest rival. So this was Themistocles—older a little, more confident, more popular than ever.

The boys got up from their couches as Archelous went forward to greet the new-comer. Then Cleander was presented to him.

"So," Themistocles smiled at him, "the young hero of Marathon has come home again." And what did you think of the Spartans, my lad?"

"They are the best soldiers in the world, sir," replied Cleander promptly.

"True. And what else?"

Cleander hesitated, flushing a little as he noticed

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one or two of the other guests listening. Then he looked up and met the keen gaze of those blue eyes.

"Nothing else, sir," he said.

Themistocles laughed approvingly. "Good lad. You haven't let them knock your critical faculty out of you. Hold to that, Cleander, at all costs. When a man loses his critical faculty he loses the power to recognize good and evil, right and wrong. He becomes only a tool, perfect of its kind, perhaps, but still only a tool, to be used for good or evil purposes at the will of others. That is something the Spartans don't know yet, but they'll find out some day."

He turned away, speaking to Archelous, and as they sat down the slaves came hurrying in with dishes of steaming food. There was roast fowl, already carved in the kitchen, and pigeon pie; dried fish from the Piraeus; vegetables heavily dressed with garlic and cooked in oil. Wicker baskets held the squares of wheaten bread that served for plates as well as for napkins for the fingers.

There was a steady buzz of conversation and clatter of dishes as the meal went on. At last the broken pieces and crumbs were swept out and little tables were set beside each guest, laden with dishes of raisins, figs, olives, and nuts. Themistocles was elected master of the feast, and under his direction the thick syrupy wine was mixed with water in the tall painted jars, and then poured into the delicate goblets that stood before the guests. When libations had been poured to Dionysus, Apollo, and Zeus, the guests lay back on their couches to enjoy the second part of the entertainment.

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Strephon, the steward of the household, first ushered in two slaves—a handsome boy, and a girl swathed in gauzy veils. Taking up his flute the boy began to play, and with slow steps the girl moved into the rhythm of a dance. As the plaintive music rose and fell she swayed to and fro, as light and graceful as a flower on its stem, slowly unwinding the delicate draperies from her head, letting them flutter behind her as her movements quickened.

Amazed, Cleander recognized her as Acte, the steward's daughter, the playmate of his childhood. Turning round to tell Ameinias of his discovery, his eye fell on Syrion. The slave stood back against the wall, his arms folded, his brows drawn down, his eyes fixed broodingly on that dainty swaying figure in the centre of the room. Cleander chuckled.

"I do believe old Syrion's taken a fancy to Acte," he whispered to Ameinias. "She's lovely enough to please somebody better, but all the same he's a good fellow, and I think he means to buy his freedom."

The dance over, the slaves disappeared, and a lyre was brought in and handed to the chief guest. Now was the time for each man to show his skill, and Themistocles led the way with a song of the poet Alcman, singing in a sweet, strong voice :

Voices of honey-sweet, haunting music,
Maidens, your poet is tired and grey ;
O for the wings of the bird that hovers
Where the crest of the salt wave flowers in spray,
Sea-blue bird of the April weather,
Careless at heart where the halcyons play.

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He handed the lyre to his neighbour, and so it passed from hand to hand, each adding his song to the others. Aeschylus also chose a song with a breath of the sea in it—a hymn to a yacht.

They say that I am small and frail,
And cannot live in stormy seas ;
It may be so, yet every sail
Makes shipwreck in the swelling breeze.
Not strength nor size can then hold fast,
But fortune's favour, Heaven's decree ;
Let others trust in oar and mast,
But may the gods take care of me.

Demetrius, proud of his recently recognized manhood, sang a love-song in his rather reedy tenor voice.

“ Like the calm sea beguiling with those blue eyes of hers,
Asclepias tempteth all men to be love's mariners.”

When the lyre had passed all round the room conversation broke out again.

“ Why is it, I wonder,” said Archelous thoughtfully, “ that so many of us choose songs with the tang of the sea about them ? ”

Themistocles' blue eyes flashed. “ It is because the sea is Athens' road to glory,” he declared. “ On land we may be easily outnumbered and overthrown, but if we become strong at sea we shall survive all attacks.”

Suddenly he sprang to his feet.

“ Men of Athens,” he cried, “ yonder lies our path.

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to fame and greatness, where the triremes forge 'through the dread gulfs of sea unharvested.' Do you think that Athens can go on her way without danger? Do you imagine, even for a moment, that the Persian King has forgotten the Athenians? And when he comes again—as he will surely come—with all the might of the Persian Empire at his back, how will you meet him? Will it be again a handful of heroes drawn up on the shore at Marathon? Or will you go out to meet him on the sea and turn him back before a Persian foot can defile the free soil of our beloved Greece?"

He paused a moment, looking round the company with those keen eyes that seemed to hold his audience like a spell.

"Hear me," he pleaded, "when I give you now a warning and a challenge. Now is the time to prepare for that day; build more ships, train up your sons to sail the sea, to fight on the heaving deck or to handle oar and sail. Let the Spartans pin their faith in their soldiers, what hope have they against an invading fleet? Athens must show all Greece the way, and I call upon every man here to give me his support, and to put his money and his skill into this great task."

Amid a storm of applause Themistocles sat down again, listening with satisfaction to the babel of talk his words had stirred up.

"Tell me, Themistocles," said one guest, "where will you get the money to build this fleet of yours?"

"From the treasury," was the prompt reply.

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"There was a scheme afoot to divide the surplus revenue from the silver mines among the citizens. I shall appeal to them to give it up—to forego their immediate advantage for the sake of their future safety. They are Athenians—they will make the sacrifice."

"And where will you get your men, Themistocles?" asked another.

"From the same place—the Athenian citizens, and especially the young men and boys. Look, we have some here among us."

All eyes followed his pointing finger to where Ameinias and Cleander sat, their faces alight with the fire of the speaker's enthusiasm.

"You boys," exclaimed Themistocles, "we look to you to build up our fleet. Will you turn your backs on the career you had planned and serve Athens on the sea, instead of in her frontier forts?"

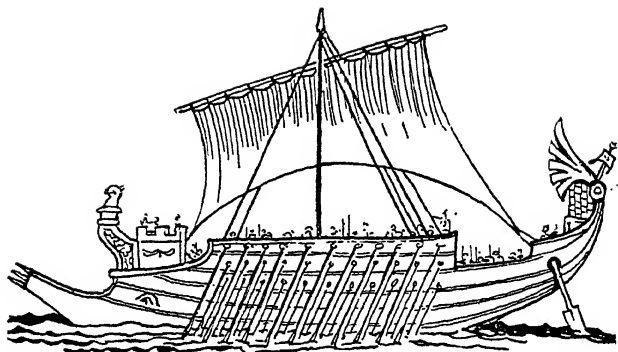
Without hesitation Cleander answered joyfully, "Of course we will, sir." Ameinias gave his more sober assent and the room rang with cheers and clapping of hands. Under cover of the general excitement Demetrius spoke to Cleander.

"What a fool you are, Cleander," he whispered. "You'll be nothing better than a slave on one of Themistocles' ill-omened ships. You should have waited to take your place among the Epheboi like a gentleman. But what else could one expect? You're a regular Spartan, ready to jump to the voice of authority, even in the mouth of a fantastical dreamer like Themistocles."

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Cleander was too much elated to listen to his croakings. The rest of the evening passed like a dream to him, until at last the guests were gone, the lamps out, and he found himself alone in his own room tumbling sleepily into bed.





CHAPTER VIII

OFF TO SEA

It was a spring morning six months later, and the sun rose into a cloudless sky. His golden beams threw a rosy glow about the Temple of Athene on the Acropolis, towering over sleeping Athens, and stole gradually down the rugged cliffs. In the houses below, the first sounds of life could be heard, as the slaves got up yawning to set about the day's tasks. Cleander, in his own room in the house in the Street of Apollo, opened his eyes slowly and stared through the open window at the empty vault of blue.

It had come at last—the day of departure, when he and Ameinias would sail away in one of the new triremes, gallant harbingers of a fleet that should one day smash the power of Persia. The six months that had passed since Themistocles sounded his challenge had seemed like years. Day after day, while wintry showers drenched the city, and cold

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winds swooped on them across grey, white-capped seas, he and Ameinias had haunted the sheds and yards where the workmen toiled at the building of the fleet. They were familiar with every line of the great vessels, from beak to rudder and from keel to masthead. They had watched with awed eyes the measuring and planing of the great oar-blades before they were fitted into the rowlocks and covered with the leather bag that would keep out the flying spray. They came home with hands and tunics splashed and stained when the "cheeks" of a ship were being given their coat of vermillion paint.

Now all was ready. To-day six triremes would put to sea, and in the foremost, the *Maiden Queen*, would go Ameinias and Cleander, under the special care of Critias the trirarch. Why lie here wasting time when there was such excitement ahead? At a shout from Cleander old Xanthias came hurrying in with water and towel, and behind him came Syrion, a look of suppressed excitement on his sunburned face.

"What's the matter, Syrion?" asked Cleander as he plunged his face into the cold water.

"Nothing," replied the slave quietly. "I've only come to tell you that I go with you to-day—as a rower on your ship."

Cleander paused in the act of taking the towel from Xanthias and let the water trickle down his face and neck unheeded.

"You what!" he gasped. "How did you arrange that? Does my father know?"

"Archelous has given his consent," said Syrion. "He is very pleased that I should be near you if

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danger threatens, and he is willing that by serving two years with the fleet I should earn my freedom."

He paused, and Cleander noticed that his colour deepened. "When we come back I'll be free," he finished, "and your father has promised that I may marry Acte, and he'll put us into one of his farms."

Cleander burst out laughing.

"Well, that's a good joke," he chuckled. "Fancy you wanting to marry little Acte, Syron. And aren't you crazy to want to marry and be a farmer when you could be sailing all round the world and fighting with Persians and pirates every other day."

"It may seem crazy to you," Syron laughed back at him, "but your time will come, young master."

He turned and was gone, and Cleander finished dressing and hurried out into the courtyard. Too excited to eat, he wandered aimlessly to and fro, getting in everybody's way, until at last it was time to leave.

Chlaris and her mother had been in tears all morning, and now they clung about Cleander, embarrassing him by their tearful devotion.

"My darling boy," wailed Agariste, "to think that you were brought back to me safely from Sparta only to be lost to me again. Why will your father listen to such a madman as Themistocles?"

Over her shoulder, as she embraced him, Cleander met the eyes of Daphne, clear, steady, and understanding. He felt a rush of gratitude and friendship towards her as he disengaged Chlaris' clinging arms.

"She's not so silly," he thought angrily. "She knows a man likes to be off after adventure and

danger, and doesn't want to be cried over and kissed." He crossed over to where she was standing.

"Good-bye, Daphne," he said. "You'll hear of us by-and-by and we'll make you proud of us yet, even though we aren't Spartans."

She flashed a smile at him at that, and pressed his hand with both her own.

"I'm proud of you already," she declared. "I'd never say an Athenian soldier could equal a Spartan, but when it comes to being a sailor that's another story. You and Ameinias will be famous some day. I know it in my heart."

She dropped her eyes suddenly, as if she had said more than she meant to, and Cleander turned away to say good-bye to Eunice, who stood silent beside the door. Her face was paler than usual, and as Cleander came up to her she pulled him towards her, whispering urgently in his ear:

"Take care of yourself, Cleander, and of Ameinias too. Tell him I'll be waiting. He'll understand."

Cleander opened wide eyes of astonishment, but with a hasty kiss she was gone, and there was nothing for it but to follow Archelous to the waiting chariot, where Syron joined them.

It seemed as if the whole population of the city had turned out to see the new triremes set off. From every street and lane since early morning little groups of people had been making for the long road that led to the Piraeus, eager to see the ceremony that was to bring good luck to the new fleet. Rich young men galloped past on their spirited horses, scattering the groups of poorer citizens and slaves who would

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have to make the journey on foot. Small boys darted in and out among the crowd. The chariots of the councillors rolled noisily along, enveloping everybody in a cloud of dust. At the Piraeus several scores of fishermen and shipwrights swelled the crowd which slowly wound its way to the shore. There the six triremes were lying on the beach, ready to push off as soon as the ceremony was completed.

Very handsome they looked with their high wooden sides, tapering masts, and graceful curved canopy over the stern. The bronze beaks and gilt figureheads shone with polishing and the vermilion-painted cheeks and gilt hawse-holes gave them an added splendour.

Up the gangways streamed the rowers, poor citizens mostly, with a sprinkling of foreigners and a few slaves, working thus to earn their freedom. On the poop stood the triarch, in shining armour and crested helmet, before him an altar and jar of wine, ready for the pouring of libations to Poseidon and Athene. Behind him the sailors and marines were drawn up in order on the decks, all facing the shore. There an altar had been built, and the priests were preparing for the sacrifice.

Coming to the edge of the crowd Archelous and his companions left the chariot. He and Cleander made their way to the enclosure reserved for the more notable citizens, while Syrion joined the stream of rowers and was slowly carried along to his ship. In the enclosure stood Aeschylus and Ameinias, and with them Themistocles, looking prouder and more handsome than ever.

"Ha, here you are at last," he greeted Archelous. -

OFF TO SEA

"I began to be afraid you had changed your mind. I had no fear for the boy, though. He won't go back on his promise. Eh, Cleander?"

Flushing with pleasure Cleander murmured a reply, and then he and Ameinias said their good-byes and hurried away to take their places on board. Themistocles watched them go.

"Do you see those ships, friends?" he asked, pointing to one after the other. "Those are the wooden walls of Athens. Behind that rampart we shall yet defy the world."

His voice rang out strongly, and a hush fell on the crowd that surrounded him. The common folk, surging outside the enclosure, fell silent too as he stepped forward with arm outstretched.

"Hear me, men of Athens," he cried. "This day we set our foot on the ladder of greatness. Athens shall yet be mistress of the sea. As we watch these few vessels take the water we see beyond them fleets yet unbuilt that shall carry the fortune, the fame and the freedom of Athens all round the world, from the harbours of Phoenicia to the Pillars of Hercules. By all the gods I swear it shall be so."

He was silent, and a great cheer arose from all the crowd. Then silence fell again as a herald stepped forward, raised a silver trumpet to his lips and blew a shrill, clear call. The priests around the altar raised their arms to the sky and began the chanted prayers of dedication, the whole company, on shore and on shipboard, joining in the chant. Then at another trumpet-call the priests raised the sacred vessels; at the same moment the captain of each trireme raised

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a silver flagon and all together poured the due libations to the gods—to Poseidon, god of the sea, to Athene, patron goddess of their city, and to Zeus, the lord of all.

This done, the crews of all the triremes raised the war chant or paean, and to that rousing music the ships went gliding into the water, one after another. The watchers on shore saw the three banks of oars lifted high in the air ; then at a signal the great waves struck the water like one. A splash of silver spray sparkled in the sun and disappeared again. Steadily, rhythmically, the rowers pulled ; the vessels drew away from the shore ; the paean sounded more faint and sweet across the widening stretch of water. Then the ships turned and moved off steadily in line towards the distant islands of the Aegean Sea.

The spectacle over, the crowd turned homewards, laughing, chattering, appraising the ships, the captains and the crews, speculating on their possible adventures. Archelous and Aeschylus walked back together to the waiting chariots, both silent, both thinking sombrely of the future, and of the part the boys might have to play in it.

Archelous' hand was already on the chariot rail when a familiar figure caught his eye and he paused.

" Xanthias," he called sharply, and the old slave turned as if he had been struck.

" What are you doing here ? " demanded Archelous. " Who is this ? " he added, noticing a veiled figure standing rather behind Xanthias.

" Sir, I only wished to see the young master departing," Xanthias explained apologetically, " and

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Acte here was determined to come with me to see the last of Syron."

Archelous was turning to mount his chariot when another figure caught his eye and he paused again, his face growing stern.

"Who else is with you?" he asked severely, and at his tone Xanthias began nervously to murmur half-audible explanations. He was cut short by his companion, who stepped forward and drew aside her veil.

"Daphne!" exclaimed Archelous, "what is the meaning of this? Have you no modesty that you come out unprotected into this crowd like a common slave-girl? What were you thinking of, child?"

Daphne returned his stern look fearlessly, but without any hint of defiance.

"I wanted to see Cleander again," she said simply, "and to see his ship and join in the prayers for his safety. In Sparta we always went to the dedication ceremonies, and I saw no harm in it."

Archelous's eyes softened as he looked at her standing there so slim and straight, with her clear honest eyes fixed on him.

"I see, I see," he agreed. "After all, Cleander is your one link with Sparta and your old home. It is natural that he should mean more to you than any of the rest of us. But still, Daphne, custom and convention are powerful things, and now that your home is in Athens it is better to hold by the Athenian way of life. You will never find an Athenian husband if you play such mad tricks as this."

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A rush of colour flushed the girl's cheeks, and for a moment her eyes seemed unnaturally bright.

"I don't want an Athenian husband," she exclaimed passionately. "All I want is to live with you and to be friends with Eunice, and to have Cleander come safe home again."

"Well, well," smiled Archelous, "these wants are easily satisfied. Come, get into the chariot and drive home with me. And you, Xanthias, see that no harm comes to Acte, or Syrion will have something to say to you when he comes home."

He helped Daphne into the chariot, the driver whipped up the horses, and they disappeared in a cloud of dust, leaving Xanthias and Acte to follow.

Meanwhile the triremes were gliding steadily eastwards. A fair breeze had sprung up, so the oars were shipped and the sails hoisted, and the water rippled smoothly past the swiftly driving keels. Below deck the oarsmen sat at ease, making one another's acquaintance and comparing notes about the handiness of the different oars. Above, the sailors put the decks in order, clearing away the signs of departure and making all ship-shape for the voyage. Up on the poop, Ameinias and Cleander lay back under the awning, chatting lazily.

"I'm glad we're off," laughed Cleander. "All these solemn farewells bore me. I hope we've some excitement soon, a brush with the Aeginetans or something. Aren't you glad to be away?"

"Not altogether," replied Ameinias thoughtfully. "It's been pretty good living in Athens after Sparta,

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and Aeschylus is a brother to be proud of. Besides, I've enjoyed being like one of your family."

He coloured a little as he spoke, but Cleander's eyes were fixed on the helmsman and he did not notice.

"That reminds me," he said, "Eunice gave me a message for you. Something about waiting. She said you would understand."

"Did she say she would wait?" asked Ameinias eagerly.

"Yes." Cleander looked at him curiously. "What did she mean?"

Ameinias coloured more deeply, but he answered boldly. "I want to marry her, Cleander," he said. "We've seen a lot of each other this winter, and I love her dearly. If she said she'd wait, that means she knows how I feel. Perhaps she feels the same."

Cleander sat up in consternation. "But Ameinias," he protested, "that's ridiculous. You're only just eighteen and going off to sea. How can you be thinking about marrying?"

"I know," was the reply; "but it may be a couple of years before we get back. By that time I'll be twenty and Eunice will be eighteen, and we'll be old enough to do as we please. If I hadn't had Eunice's message, though, I'd have been afraid some one else might come and claim her before I got back. Now I know it's all right, I shan't worry."

Cleander got up rather crossly. "Well, I must say you and Syrion are a fine pair of comrades," he grumbled, "falling in love and mooning about marriage when I thought we were all going out with our minds set on defeating the Persians, bringing fame

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to Athens and honour to Themistocles. O well, perhaps you'll both change your minds before we get home again."

This thought restored his natural good temper, and he sauntered off laughing, "to look for pirates" off the coast of Aegina.

CHAPTER IX

A HIDDEN PLOT REVEALED

IN one respect at least Cleander's hopes were disappointed. When, after two and a half years of wandering, their trireme sailed once more into the harbour at the Piraeus, Ameinias and Syrion were as eager as ever for marriage, as impatient to be back in Athens as on the day they left. Cleander himself was not sorry to see the sunset glow on the purple peaks of Mount Hymettus, the rugged outline of the Acropolis, temple-crowned against the evening sky. After all these months of cramped quarters and rough food it was pleasant to look forward to the cushioned couches and the well-cooked meals, and to his own bed in his own cool room at home.

In spite of the love-sickness that Cleander had liked to tease them about, Ameinias and Syrion had proved themselves gallant comrades, not at all behind him in keenness and courage. When the wild storms from the northern forests lashed the waters of the Euxine into froth and foam, when the oars snapped like twigs under the great waves and the rowers struggled in the darkness in panic-stricken confusion, then it was Syrion who shouted the words of encouragement and confidence that brought them to their senses so that the lives of all on board were saved.

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There had been skirmishes in plenty, too, now with an Aeginetan war vessel, again with a Moorish pirate beyond the Pillars of Hercules, once with a quinquereme from Phoenicia. In all these encounters and many others Ameinias had stood shoulder to shoulder with Cleander, each trying to outdo the other in valour.

With these and a hundred other tales the two young men held the company spellbound, as they sat evening after evening in the courtyard of Archelous' house. When the afternoon's exercise at the Gymnasium was over, Aeschylus and Ameinias would often come home with Cleander for dinner. It was understood now that Ameinias and Eunice would soon be married, so without the restraint of convention that would have kept the girls in their own quarters the whole family would gather to listen to the travellers' tales. Sometimes Themistocles joined them, glorying unashamed in the achievements of his fleet and in his own share in their renown.

At last, however, the wedding day dawned, a day of clear sunshine unsullied by the tiniest cloud. From early morning the whole house rang with the laughter and chatter of the girls who came to bring gifts to Eunice and to share in the festivities. The courtyard was hung with olive branches and with garlands of flowers. In the kitchen, great piles of sesame cakes stood ready for the ceremonial feast. Before the family altar the priest had laid out the vessels for the sacrifices and prayers.

As the day wore on, the table on which the presents were displayed grew more and more heavily loaded. Here were porcelain vases of choicest workmanship,

A HIDDEN PLOT REVEALED

fine robes, spun and embroidered by the givers, jewels in quaint settings of gold and silver, a lyre inlaid with ivory, and a silver mirror.

In the evening the family appeared, all radiant in their wedding robes. Agariste led the bride to the seat of honour at one side of the courtyard. Eunice's face was pale, but there was calm serenity in her dark eyes. A golden fillet sparkled in her dark hair, and golden ornaments adorned her throat and wrists. Behind her came a company of her friends, all in filmy dresses of white, and headed by Chlaris and Daphne.

When they had taken their places the door was opened and Aeschylus led in the bridegroom, followed by a troop of his friends. Cleander walked immediately behind them, divided in mind between pleasure at his friend's happiness and sorrow at the breaking of their close companionship. When all were seated the priests recited the prayers for the marriage ceremony and made the due sacrifices on the altar.

Then slaves brought round the cups of wine and baskets of sesame cakes, and amid much laughter and gaiety the healths of the bride and bridegroom were toasted. Darkness fell before the feasting was finished, and then the whole party rose, snatching torches and olive branches from the walls, and formed into a procession. Thus escorted and garlanded with flowers Eunice left her own home, and came to the home of her husband amid songs of rejoicing and shouts of praise to Hymen.

The last torch had fizzled into darkness and the echoes of the last song had died away when Cleander felt a hand slipped under his arm, and turning, found

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Daphne at his side. In the faint starlight her eyes were pools of darkness in her pale face, and for a moment he wondered if she were ill.

"Cleander," she whispered urgently, "I must speak to you alone. It is something that will not wait and I need your advice. Where can we talk without being interrupted?"

He hesitated, thinking swiftly before he spoke.

"In the morning my father is going out to inspect the olive garden. Get him to take you and old Chloe with him, and while he is with the grieve do you slip down to the new fountain at the corner near the road. I'll meet you there."

As silently as she had approached him, Daphne slipped away and took her place among the other girls on the homeward journey.

"You want to go out to the olive garden with me?" questioned Archelous when Daphne put her request the next morning. "Well, well, you must miss the free and easy life you had in Sparta. It would be unkind to deprive you of all freedom. Yes, you may come, but bring Chloe with you, for you must amuse yourself while I go up to the far fields with Damon."

"Fancy wanting to go out to the farm," laughed Chlaris. "You'd much better go with me to the Temple of Apollo. I want to see Eunice's votive offerings before the shrine of Artemis. I wish it were my turn to dedicate my maiden gifts to her."

"O your turn will come soon enough," replied Daphne. "When you carry your garland in the procession to Athene's Temple all the young men try to get a glimpse of you."

A HIDDEN PLOT REVEALED

Chlaris laughed and blushed, but said no more. Daphne, too, was silent till the sound of shouts at the door told that the mule-car was ready. She and Chloe were quickly helped in, and with Archelous riding ahead they set off for the olive garden.

"Now then, Daphne," said Archelous as he helped her down from the car in the cobbled farmyard, "what will you do till I come back? Will you sit in the courtyard with the grieve's wife?"

"O no," exclaimed Daphne quickly, "that would be no change from being at home. Chloe and I will walk through the garden and see the new fountain. Send one of the children to call us when you are ready."

Archelous agreed, and without further waste of time he and Damon the grieve set off for the further fields. Daphne and Chloe passed through the little gate in the wall that separated the farm steading from the olive garden and made their way slowly across the grass under the welcome shade.

In the farthest corner of the garden, where only a wall divided it from the high road leading northward out of Athens, Archelous had built a fountain. It was open to the road on one side and to the garden on the other, and was surrounded by a miniature pillared portico of white marble. A vine had been trained round the pillars, so that except where the fountain itself leaped up sparkling into the sunshine, nobody could see from one side of the portico to the other.

Here, on one of the marble benches, Daphne sat down to wait for Cleander, Chloe going off at her bidding to sit on the grass some distance away. In a very few moments there was a sound of a horse's

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hoofs, then a pause as the rider dismounted and tethered his horse to a tree. Then, skilfully moving aside the branches of the vine, Cleander squeezed through the gap.

"Well, here I am, Daphne," was his greeting. "Now tell me what's this urgent business of yours?"

From the folds of her tunic Daphne drew a torn piece of papyrus and handed it to Cleander.

"Xanthias and I are good friends, Cleander," she said seriously, "and that's why he brought this paper to me instead of taking it to your father, as perhaps he should have done. It was just before you came home that he found it, caught in among the rhododendron bushes at the back of the farm steading here. He saw that it was torn and tried to find the other bits, but they must have blown right away. Then he read it and grew suspicious, so he brought it to me, but we haven't been able to understand it. So I kept it to show you, because your name is on it."

"My name on it," exclaimed Cleander. "What's it all about, anyway?" and he opened the torn paper and examined it carefully.

atus, greeting from
you for news of the
es for the invasion.
are many faithful friends
as at the time of
thon, who will aid him
take care this
no Cleander
plans. our mes-
orders at Smyrna.

A HIDDEN PLOT REVEALED

Amazement and anger chased each other across Cleander's face as he read the words on the crumpled piece of paper.

"I don't know what it means, Daphne," he exclaimed at last, "but there's some villainy here, sure enough. Where did you say Xanthias found it?"

"Among the rhododendron bushes behind the farm," she replied. "The wind had blown it in among the leaves, almost out of sight."

Cleander read it again and shook his head. "No, I don't quite get the meaning, but I can see it means no good. I must take it straight off to Themistocles. If there's any danger to the State, it's he who should know of it."

Daphne laid a hand on his arm. "If it means danger, Cleander, I know you'll be in the midst of it. But guard your life well. It's too precious to be thrown away heedlessly."

At her serious tone Cleander turned to look at her. Through the vine leaves the sunlight fell in chequered splashes of gold on her blue dress and chestnut curls. There was a deeper flush than usual in her cheeks, and a serious look in the brown eyes that met his so steadily. To Cleander it was as if a veil had been raised and he saw her beauty for the first time.

"Is my life precious to you, Daphne?" he asked, conscious as he spoke of a sudden tide of excitement that set a little pulse beating in his throat.

Without hesitation, without coquetry, she answered at once:

"More precious than any other in the world."

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With a rush the realization broke on Cleander that this was the fitting climax to the long friendship between Daphne and himself. How blind and stupid he had been not to realize before that he loved this beautiful girl, and that she loved him. He had appreciated her constant loyalty, her sympathy and understanding, but had missed the greatest gift that she was waiting to give him.

"Daphne!" he cried, "what a fool I've been. And blind as well. All this time I've thought of you as a friend, and yet all the time I've been loving you in my heart without knowing it. Do you truly love me too?"

"Of course I love you, Cleander," Daphne laughed. "I've loved you ever since the old days in dear Sparta. You mean more to me than all the world besides." She dimpled suddenly. "But I thought you were never going to waken up and realize it," she added.

Gripping both her hands, Cleander spoke rapidly and urgently.

"O fool that I am! Why did I have to wait till danger threatened us to realize this, Daphne? I must go to Themistocles. My duty to the State comes first. But whatever happens I'll always love you. You do believe that, don't you? Just as soon as ever I can I'll get my father's permission and we'll be married. You will wait for me, Daphne darling, won't you?"

"Of course I will. Haven't I waited nearly three years already? But remember, whatever danger your duty to the State involves, your life belongs to

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me too now. Don't throw it away heedlessly, Cleander."

With new-found confidence Cleander drew her into his arms, pressing his lips to her hair, her eyes, her mouth. For a long moment he clung to her, then desperately drew away. One swift hand clasp, one good-bye, and he disappeared as he had come through the hanging vine branches. In another moment Daphne heard his horse's hoof-beats die away towards Athens and silence descended on the garden once again.

CHAPTER X

SEEKING THE TRAITOR

IN the State Council hall a group of men sat round the Council board. Their faces were grave and anxious, and they looked steadily towards the head of the table where Themistocles sat. Opposite him, at the foot of the table, stood Cleander, and between them on the shining surface lay the fateful scrap of paper. Cleander had lost no time in taking it to Themistocles at his house, and there they had puzzled over the cryptic message. Soon slaves were hurrying to the houses of the other generals, summoning them to meet in council without delay.

"You'd better come too, Cleander," Themistocles had said. "They may want to question you."

So Cleander hurried home and changed into his best tunic, the ivory silk with the border of gold and Tyrian purple, and made his way with the others to the Council Hall.

As he climbed the broad flight of steps from the market-place he remembered vividly the sunny day ten years before, when he and Demetrius, from behind a pillar, had watched the generals arrive in that same hall to hear Pheidippides give his report. There were many changes since then. Of the generals

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whose names Demetrius had been able to tell him, Callimachus and Stesilaus lay dead on the field of Marathon, Miltiades had died in tragic circumstances, Aristides was banished from Athens. Only Themistocles remained, more vigorous, more powerful than ever. Cleander's thoughts came back to the present with a jerk and he heard Themistocles speaking.

"We all know," he was saying, "that the Persian King is planning an expedition against Greece. He has sent heralds to all the Greek states demanding tribute of earth and water. Athens and Sparta alone have received no envoys, so we may understand that we are the chief objects of his hatred and prepare accordingly. It seems to me, however that this letter suggests the presence of traitors in our midst."

He looked all round for confirmation, and the generals nodded gravely. One of them turned to Cleander.

"What proof have you of the good faith of the slave who found this paper?" he asked.

"Xanthias has been with our family from childhood," replied Cleander, flushing slightly. "I would answer for him as for one of ourselves. But Damon, the griever at the farm is a new man, an islander; we know less about him."

"He must stay where he is for the present," ordered Themistocles. "If he is in league with the traitors he may serve as a decoy, if he is not alarmed."

"What is this reference to 'no Cleander' in the letter?" asked one of the younger generals.

"I think, sir, it refers to my good luck in overhearing the plans of the traitors before the battle of

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Marathon. I was able to warn Miltiades in time," was Cleander's reply.

Slowly the discussion dragged on, but at last out of a labyrinth of talk three decisions emerged. First, in face of the threat from Persia an embassy must be sent to seek help from all the scattered Greek colonies which might be persuaded to come to the help of the motherland. Second, envoys must be sent to Delphi, to consult the oracle. Third, spies must be sent to Smyrna to discover the extent of the Persian King's preparations, and to try to track down the messenger of the traitors, who was evidently to receive his orders there.

At this Cleander took an eager step forward.

"Sirs," he exclaimed, "I beg you to let me go to Smyrna. I will dare anything to unmask this villain who raises his traitorous head again."

Eagerly he looked from one stern face to another and saw approval gradually dawning there.

"Well, sirs," Themistocles' voice was peremptory, "shall we let this headstrong young man go? No doubt he feels a proprietary interest in the traitor whose plans he foiled ten years ago."

There was a general smile, and the councillors gave their vote unanimously for this eager volunteer.

"You may take one trusty companion with you. Cleander, but no more," was Themistocles' order. "We want no large company babbling secrets all over the city. Go home now, and prepare to leave at once. Maro the ship-master shall have orders to sail to-night."

With shining eyes Cleander saluted the company

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and hurried off to make his preparations. As he left the hall, however, some of the sparkle died out of his face. It would be difficult to explain this sudden departure to his family, he thought. Archelous would understand, of course. He knew that passionate urge to defend the freedom of Athens that made one burn to serve her, no matter where or how. Daphne, too, would understand, but it would be a bitter task to tell her they must separate when it seemed as if they had only newly found each other. Agariste and Chlaris would be sure to make a scene and want to know all the details of where he was going and why and how. Cleander frowned a little and decided to ask his father to help him to get away secretly. He could explain the matter to them somehow afterwards.

The next problem was, who should be his companion. It ought to be Ameinias, of course, but he had this very day taken Eunice away from Athens to visit the old home of his family at Eleusis. There was no time to get him back, and in any case Cleander's newly discovered love for Daphne made him unwilling to tear Ameinias from Eunice so soon.

What about Syrion, though? He had won his freedom, but as yet he and Acte were not married. At the thought of him Cleander hastened his steps, and as luck would have it, only a few yards farther on he met Syrion himself coming to look for him. Taking him by the arm Cleander drew him quickly out of the crowded street into a small alcove at the side. In a few hurried words he explained the situation and begged Syrion to go with him.

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"I know you want to marry Acte, Syrion," he apologized, "but we won't be away long. As a matter of fact," and here he blushed a little shamefacedly, "I want to marry Daphne, too, but we'll have to wait."

Syrion's laugh rang out, but his eyes were friendly as he clapped Cleander on the shoulder.

"I told you your time would come," he chuckled. "Now perhaps you'll understand why I didn't feel as keen as you on sailing round the world and fighting pirates every other day."

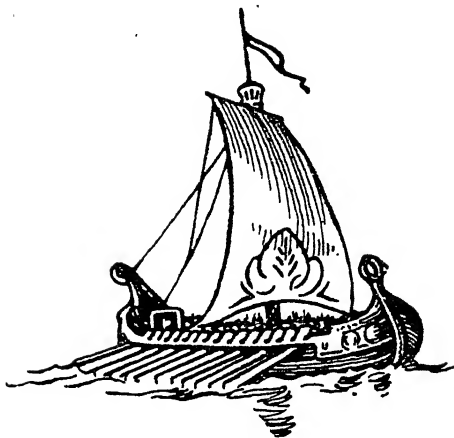
His face grew sober again as he remembered Cleander's request, but after a pause he looked up steadily.

"I'll go with you, Cleander," he said. "There's no man with whom I'd rather go into danger, and none I'd rather see come back safely. You can count on me to the last breath. Acte will wait for me, and perhaps Archelous will let her father go into the farm on Salamis that he promised me. He could hold it for me till I come home."

"I'll see to that, Syrion," promised Cleander. "I was sure you would stand by me. Come along. We must get home at once if we're to be ready to sail to-night."

Some weeks later a little trading vessel with a cargo of figs, olive oil, and wine, nosed her way in among the shipping that thronged the quays of Smyrna. Here were corn ships from the Euxine, manned by rugged, bearded fellows from the forests of the north. There were the little coasters from

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Greek ship.

Tyre and Sidon, with their cargoes of silks and spices from the East. Galleys from Carthage and Syracuse, Egypt and Syria, swung side by side, with here and there the high bulwarks of a trireme or quinquereme towering above the rest. The new-comer glided smoothly to her anchorage between a Carthaginian trader and an Egyptian transport.

"You're free to go ashore as you please," the master told Cleander. "Keep your eyes and ears open, and don't get into any trouble if you can help it."

So Cleander and Syrion, each carrying a short heavy stick as a precaution, set off to explore the city. Somehow the heat, the noise, and the smells were all much more intense than in Athens. The sun shone with a fiercer heat and there was no cool sea

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breeze to temper his rays. The narrow streets between tall blank walls were crowded with people, not strolling in leisurely friendliness as in Athens, but striding to and fro, casting suspicious looks at one another as they passed.

Among these crowds were foreigners of every nation known to the world of that day. Most prominent, of course, were the Persians, the ruling nation, rolling past in handsome chariots, their robes and jewels flashing gold and red, peacock and purple, in the blazing sun. The native Ionians were more numerous than the Persians, but they went about their business unobtrusively, as if the shadow of the terrible vengeance that had punished their last revolt still rested on their spirits. They moved aside silently to make way for the Median soldiers who swaggered down the streets, for swarthy Indians or huge Ethiopians, who lounged along looking curiously to right and left. In the market-place Phoenician traders chattered volubly with Greeks from the islands, or displayed their tempting wares before the astonished eyes of the wild horsemen from Macedonia or Thrace.

"I don't like it, Syrion," exclaimed Cleander, when they had walked up and down for some time. "It seems as if all we've heard about the size of Xerxes' army must be true. I've seen men to-day from every corner of the Persian Empire, and all fighting men at that."

"What's puzzling me," replied Syrion, "is how we're ever to find one treacherous messenger in all this throng."

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Cleander nodded agreement. "I suppose we may take it that he'll be a Greek," he suggested. "That narrows down the search a bit. I daresay the most likely place to find him would be with Demaratus, the Spartan King. You know he was exiled the year I went to Sparta. They say he's in high favour with Xerxes."

They strolled up one street and down another before Syrion spoke again.

"I've had an idea, Cleander," he said at last. "I'll tell you what we should do. You go back to the ship, or keep within reach of her at least, and I'll go and find where Demaratus lodges and mix with his slaves. It may be that I'll hear something to help us that way."

"H'm," frowned Cleander, "that doesn't sound much good to me. I'm to kick my heels on that dirty little ship while you do all the work and have all the excitement. No, I'll go with you."

"No, no, you mustn't come," protested Syrion. "Any one could see at a glance that you had never been a slave, and that would lead to awkward questions. I know the slaves' jargon, and can easily hide the fact that I'm free now. Besides, there's no use both of us walking into the lion's den."

Very reluctantly Cleander allowed himself to be persuaded, and at last, as dusk was falling, they made their way back to the ship. As soon as the sun was up the next morning, Syrion went ashore again.

"Take care now, Syrion," Cleander warned him.

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“Remember you’re more use to Athens alive than dead. And to Acte, too.”

The days that followed were among the longest that Cleander had ever spent. Afraid to go far into the town alone, he sat on the hot deck staring out over the water, or wandered restlessly up and down the quayside. One day he ventured up to the market-place, in the hope of getting a glimpse of Syron, but there was no sign of him—only more and more of those fierce soldiers, who thronged the streets as before.

Dusk came down on him suddenly, before he got back to the ship, and as he hurried down the steep lanes that led to the harbour he thought he heard footsteps following him. He turned swiftly, tightening his grip on his short stick, but nobody appeared and he reached the ship unmolested.

When four days had passed, Cleander was almost sick with anxiety, and was determined to seek out Demaratus’ lodging himself and risk the consequences. But at last, on the morning of the fifth day, as he sat drearily scanning the quay, a familiar figure came out of one of the lanes and waved for the small boat to take him off. Cleander himself rowed in to fetch him and eagerly listened to his story.

“Demaratus is in high favour, sure enough,” Syron assured him. “He lives in a huge house up on the hill with dozens of slaves running to and fro. I’d no difficulty in getting in among that crowd. I said I was a runaway slave from Argos. It took me a day or two to sort them all out, they were such a mixed crew, but by the third day I had a fair idea who

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was who. There's one man whose face is faintly familiar to me. I can't think where I've seen him before, but I was suspicious of him right away, especially as I can't make out what his position is in Demaratus' household."

By this time they had reached the ship, and making fast the small boat they clambered up to the deck. Finding a shady corner where they would not be disturbed they sat down, and Syrion continued his story.

"Yesterday afternoon I went out to the stables (you know how fond I am of horses, Cleander), and as I was in one of the stalls two people stopped right in front of the stable door. Then I heard one of them say, 'I'll meet him in the wine-shop in the Street of the Metal-workers an hour after noon. Tell him to bring the orders from Athens.' I peeped over the stall, and sure enough it was this fellow Cleon."

"By Hercules, what luck!" exclaimed Cleander. "We'll catch the villain red-handed and probably get his orders too."

"That's the idea," agreed Syrion. "So I came for you, for I thought if it came to a fight we could give a better account of ourselves if we were together. Isn't that right?"

Cleander's eyes sparkled and he gripped Syrion's hand excitedly. "Together to the death, Syrion," he said laughing, "for the honour of Athens."

CHAPTER XI

IN THE LION'S DEN

NOON found Cleander and Syrion on shore once more and making their way slowly and warily into the town.

"We mustn't let him see we're following him," Cleander declared. "We'd better look around beforehand and find a place where we can watch for him without being seen ourselves."

They explored the Street of the Metal-workers, and to their delight found a small alley-way leading out of it only a few hundred yards from the door of the wine-shop, and on the other side of the street. Here, themselves concealed, they could watch every one who entered or left the tavern.

At this hour, with the sun blazing at its fiercest, the streets were nearly deserted, and Cleander and Syrion took up their station unobserved. A few minutes later a burly Median soldier came out of the wine-shop, swaying unsteadily on his huge brawny legs. For a moment he hesitated, then staggered along in the direction of the alley-way. Once or twice he paused, hiccuping, and steadied himself with a hand on the wall. Then he rolled on and disappeared into the next street.

"The wine seems to be good there," chuckled

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Cleander. "Let's hope your friend samples it too. That would make our task the easier."

Syrion gripped his arm without reply, and following the direction of his gaze Cleander saw a man coming up the street from the other end. He was short and sturdy, with thick black hair and heavy eyebrows. He wore a homespun tunic and carried a heavy staff. Cleander's first thought was that he looked an ugly customer; his next was one of relief that the man was alone.

Without hesitation, glancing neither to right nor left, the stranger marched down the two or three steps leading to the wine-shop and disappeared inside.

"Give him a minute or two to get settled," whispered Cleander. Then after a pause he added, "Come on," and led the way across the street. The door of the tavern was closed, but it opened without difficulty and the two burst in. For a moment the darkness after the brilliant sunshine of the street brought them up, blinking uncertainly. As their eyes grew accustomed to it they gazed around eagerly, but the room was empty.

Suddenly a door in the far corner opened and their quarry appeared. Cleander sprang towards him, but even as he did so there came a warning cry from Syrion. It was too late. The stranger stepped aside, revealing the bronze breastplates and leather casques of half a dozen Median soldiers, who threw themselves on Cleander, led by the seeming tippler.

"Syrion, Syrion, to me. Quick," shouted Cleander, as he felt himself borne down by the weight of this unexpected onslaught. But Syrion could not help

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him. As the inner door had opened, the outer one had done so too, and another bunch of armed men came tumbling in, taking Syrion in the rear. In vain the two Athenians struggled with all their might, striking out valiantly in all directions. They were no match for a dozen armed men, and the fight was soon over. Bruised and bleeding, they were firmly bound with leather thongs and flung down on a bench that stood against the wall.

Then the inner door opened again and the black-haired stranger came into the room. He nodded to the soldiers and they stood back, still, however, keeping a watchful eye on the prisoners. Cleon (as Syrion had called him) came forward and looked at them gloatingly.

"Spies," he spat out at last; "Athenian spies. O you thought you were clever, I daresay, getting into the household of Demaratus, nosing out the secrets of the great king. Fool! I knew you from the moment you set foot in the house."

He roared with laughter, and then suddenly struck Syrion viciously in the face.

"Idiot and madman," he went on, "to think you could match your puny wits against mine. How I laughed to see you peeping out from the stable, fancying yourself a conspirator. I knew I'd fetch you here as straight as an arrow from the bow."

He turned suddenly to Cleander, and putting his hand under the younger man's chin, jerked his head back. One of Cleander's eyes was already turning black, and there was a little trickle of blood at the corner of his mouth.

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"Cleander, son of Archelous," he laughed. "A fine sight this would be for some that I know of. They made a man of you at Sparta, did they?"

He put his face close to Cleander's and snapped his words out savagely.

"The Spartans themselves shudder to see the fate the Persians mete out to spies."

Then turning to the soldiers he gave a quick command in Persian. At once they dragged the prisoners to their feet and led them, dazed and despairing, out into the sunshine and through the streets to the citadel. There, their thongs were removed, they were flung together into one of the dungeons, and the heavy door clanged shut upon them.

All this time there had been no sound from either of them, but now Syrion gave a groan.

"The gods have forsaken us, Cleander," he sighed; "but I am to blame as well. It's my fault that your life is in danger, and yet you know I would gladly give my own to set you free."

Cleander laughed a little unsteadily.

"Don't despair, Syrion," he said, "we're not dead yet, and who knows, Athene may be watching over us even yet. I'll never forget the words Aeschylus said to me when first I met him: 'Set your heart on Liberty, and she will set you where you can best serve her cause.' I'm convinced we shall still serve the liberty of Athens somehow."

"What about that fellow Cleon?" asked Syrion. "Did you recognize him?"

"No, but his face was familiar to me too. He

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seemed to know a lot about us, which more or less proves he's from Athens, and probably the very man we're looking for. If we could remember where we had seen him in Athens we might have a clue to the traitors there."

Slowly the hours dragged on. There was a tiny opening high up in the wall of the cell, and through this they could see the light grow softer as the sun drew westward. Suddenly the door was opened and a man flung in beside them.

"There's another to keep you company," shouted the captain of the guard, and banged the door shut again.

This proved to be Maro, the ship-master, and when he could speak they eagerly plied him with questions. It seemed that just before noon soldiers had come on board and demanded to see the captain. They had questioned him closely about where he had come from, what was his cargo, where he got his crew, and so on. Finally, after an hour of questioning, a new-comer arrived; a short dark man, the captain said, by whose orders he was overpowered and brought to the citadel.

Syrion, leaning his aching head in his hands, could hardly control his distress at the thought that he had thus brought both his companions into such desperate danger. The other two did their best to console him, Cleander especially insisting that while there was life there was hope. At last darkness fell completely. Overcome with weariness and with the pain of their bruises all three lay down on the earth floor and fell into uneasy sleep.

At dawn, the jailer brought in a pitcher of water

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and some black bread. He was a swarthy fellow with a brutal face, scarred in many fights, and he made no comment, knowing no word of Greek. When he had gone, the prisoners returned to the weary task of speculating on their probable fate, looking in vain for any possible way of escape. That day passed, and another night, and still they saw no one but the gruff jailer. On the morning of the third day, however, the door was flung open and Cleon appeared with a company of soldiers. At a word of command they came crowding into the little cell, seizing the prisoners roughly and fastening their hands behind their backs. As they were pushed towards the door, Cleander found himself face to face with Cleon, and jerking himself free of his captor for a moment he stood still.

"Where are we going?" he demanded, "and by what right do you treat us like this?"

The man smiled evilly, and Cleander noticed an ugly scar on his left temple that he seemed to remember seeing in other circumstances.

"You're going before the Persian general," sneered Cleon. "He'll put you proud Athenians in your place. When his men have finished with you, you won't talk so much about 'rights.'"

He gave an angry order, the soldiers hustled Cleander past, and the little procession set off for the general's quarters.

Everywhere were soldiers, men in all fashions of armour, carrying every kind of weapon, all thronging the rooms and corridors of the citadel. They looked curiously at the prisoners as they passed, and some

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joked roughly in their own language, but none seemed particularly moved by the sight. At last they entered the hall where the general held his court-martial.

Down the two sides of the hall were little tables, where clerks sat busy, or money-changers clinked their little piles of coins. Messengers were continually passing out and in to one table or another, and captains strode to and fro with imperious swagger. On a raised dais at the far end of the room sat the general, a huge bearded Persian clad in bronze armour. Over this he wore a loose robe of purple silk, trimmed with gold fringes and bound with a golden girdle. Heavy rings sparkled on his fingers, and his long hair was elaborately decorated. Behind him an Ethiopian slave waved a splendid fan of peacock feathers.

"Bring up the prisoners," shouted a herald, and the soldiers pushed them forward.

"Kneel to the representative of the Great King," shouted the herald.

The ship-master, trembling, clapped down on his knees at once, but Cleander and Syryon stood firm. The general's hawk-like eyes were fixed on them.

"Kneel," he thundered.

"A free Athenian kneels to no man," declared Cleander boldly, but the words were hardly out of his mouth when the soldiers on each side of him grasped his arms, twisting them fiercely, and bringing him to his knees in spite of himself. Choking with rage and shame, he listened in a daze to the voice of Cleon denouncing them as spies, and to the general

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giving orders that they should die at dawn the next day.

Back in their cell the ship-master gave himself up to tears and lamentation.

"Now Zeus save us," he moaned, "I am a poor man, and it is no will of mine to offend the Great King. What have I done that the gods should desert me now? My cargo, my savings, my ship itself, all will I give to the gods if they will save me."

He rocked himself to and fro in despair, and Cleander and Syrion, unable to console him, drew away in disgust, sitting down side by side with their backs against the wall.

"Do you forgive me, Cleander?" Syrion asked at last in a low voice.

"Don't be a fool," Cleander replied half angrily. "It's no more your fault than mine. After all, I should ask your forgiveness, since it was I who persuaded you to come on this ill-omened enterprise."

Then he added curiously, "Why did you come, Syrion?"

There was a pause, and then the other answered quietly, "I came because I had an ambition to fulfil. From the time we met, ten years ago, there have been two aims before me—to win my freedom, and to gain your friendship. The first I had attained. The second I thought might be achieved on this venture, and as I said at the time there's no man with whom I'd rather face danger."

He was silent for a while, and Cleander, amazed, could hardly find words to reply.

"This isn't the first time we've faced death to—

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gether, Syrion," he said at last. "How could we fail to be friends?"

Syrion leaned his head back against the wall, and a shaft of sunlight from the tiny opening lit his face with an unusual glow.

"Do you remember, Cleander," he went on in a dreamy tone, "that day we first met, how you spoke of your love for Athens and Greece? You said they were the home of freedom and beauty, and must never be enslaved. I thought a lot about that afterwards (I hadn't bothered much about thinking before) and I began to see what you were driving at. Even to be a slave in Athens is to have a share in that beauty, and an interest in that freedom. I've seen the Spartans with their cruel discipline that kills the mind, and the Persian despots, and the Egyptian priests who bind the free spirit of man as they bind the dead in mummy robes. I've realized that Athens stands for something different—free thought, free speech, the pushing out of man's spirit into every realm of thought and action. That's why I'm with you heart and soul, Cleander, against this invasion by the barbarians."

When Syrion stopped speaking there was silence in the little cell. Each sat quietly, wrapped in his own thoughts, as the shaft of light moved slowly up the wall, disappearing at last when darkness fell.

It was still dark when there came a sound of trampling feet, the clink of weapons, and the grinding of the key in the lock. The door was flung open, and the flare of torches revealed the usual company of Median soldiers.

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"Come along," shouted the captain. "Get the traitors tied up and bring them out."

The guards entered and pulled the prisoners roughly into place, binding their hands behind them as before. Even the ship-master had ceased his moans, and all three kept a proud silence as they were dragged towards the door.

Suddenly there was a clamour outside, hurried footsteps and shouts echoing down the passage.

"Make room for Demaratus there," cried a voice. "Way for the King of Sparta."

A slave rushed up to the captain and handed him a letter, sealed with the seal of the Great King, then stood back panting. There was an expectant pause, then into the glare of the torches stepped a tall fair man wearing the arms of a Spartan general.

"Stand back, there," he commanded in a quiet, authoritative voice, and the soldiers stood aside, leaving him face to face with the prisoners.

"So you are the Athenian spies," he said softly. "Well, well, you are prepared for death, I see; but Charon shall be cheated of his fee yet a while. Xerxes has graciously commanded that your lives be spared, and that you be placed where you can see the departure of his army from Smyrna as the sun rises to-day. He thinks that the description of it which you will carry back to Greece will strike such terror to all hearts that there will be no more talk of resistance to his claims."

He turned to the soldiers and gave a peremptory order: "Unbind them and bring them after us."

Then, without another glance at the three he had

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so amazingly reprieved from death, he turned and walked slowly towards the outer door. Like men in a dream they felt their bonds removed and found themselves walking, unhampered, between the two files of soldiers. Along the passage, across the courtyard, out into the open street they passed, and as dawn broke the gate of the citadel clanged behind them. They were free.

In the street outside a retinue of slaves awaited the exiled king. From among them he singled out half a dozen, under a man unmistakably of Spartan birth.

"These men are in your charge, Haemon," he gave order. "Take them to the little hill beyond the town to the sea to see the army pass. Then see their ship out of the harbour as I ordered."

Suddenly he turned to the prisoners, fixing his eyes especially on Cleander.

"Farewell," he said. "When you see the hosts of Xerxes, 'in very likeness of the leaves of the forest or the sands of the sea,' as Homer hath it, remember that a Spartan king still believes in the valour of his countrymen."

A strange look, half proud, half wistful, crossed his face, but without more words he mounted his horse and rode off with his bodyguard to join the Persian King.

The slaves who were left had had orders to see the prisoners fed, and while they supplied them with bread and cheese, honey and fruit, they chatted in friendly fashion. Then they led the way out of the city to a little hillock past which the army would march on its way north to the Hellespont.

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What a sight was there to stun the senses of the boldest ! First came the baggage animals and their drivers, a motley crowd, heralding their coming with shouts of men and neighing of horses and mules. They passed in a cloud of dust full of oaths and blows and tossing manes. After them there was a space, and then the army proper appeared.

At their head came a thousand horsemen, the flower of the Persian cavalry, followed by a thousand spearmen. These carried their lances with the tips pointing downwards, and the golden pomegranates on the other end sparkled as the rising sun caught them in its slanting rays.

Behind them came ten sacred horses, richly harnessed in cloth of gold and scarlet and purple, and followed by the sacred chariot of Zeus, made of pure gold and drawn by eight milk-white steeds. No mortal was allowed to ride in that chariot, so the charioteer walked behind, skilfully handling the long silken reins with his lean, strong hands. Syryon drew a breath of envy as he watched him.

Xerxes himself, in his chariot inlaid with ebony and ivory, followed close behind, robed in rich silks, and weighed down with ornaments and chains of gold. At his back came another thousand spearmen, their spears decorated with golden apples, and after them the famous " Immortals," the pride of his army, so named because their number was always ten thousand, never more and never less. One thousand of them carried spears fitted with golden pomegranates, and these encircled the other nine thousand, whose spears bore pomegranates of silver.

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Finally, there came another body of cavalry, ten thousand strong, and after them the rest of the army followed pell-mell, a confused and seething mob of men, though each nation kept more or less to itself. There were arms and weapons of all kinds, the brazen helmets and iron-bound clubs of the Assyrians ; the cotton robes of the Indians ; long cloaks of the Arabians, who rode on swift camels instead of horses ; the leopard skins of the Ethiopians, whose bodies were painted half white and half vermillion, and whose spears were tipped with antelope horn. There were leather casques and wooden helmets, shields of bronze and of ox-hide.

Hour after hour the procession continued, till the clouds of dust made the bright day dark, and the steady tramp of feet seemed to shake the very earth. Not until the last man had strutted past, to be swallowed up in the moving column of dust, did the watchers move from their place.

When all were gone, Haemon led the way back to the town and to the harbour.

"The might of Persia has been unfolded before you this day," he said solemnly. "Tell the Athenians that they can never hope to stand against such odds."

"We shall see," smiled Cleander. "Who knows what a handful of free men may do against a rabble of slaves."

So saying he led the way down to the small boat that was waiting for them. As the sun was setting, their little vessel drew out of the harbour, heading westward for Greece.

CHAPTER XII

PREPARING TO MEET THE PERSIANS

THE house of Archelous lay very quiet under the noonday sun. From the loom-room came the clack-clack of the shuttle as Agariste supervised the weaving of a new piece of cloth. From the kitchen premises came an occasional clatter of pots and pans. But the courtyard, where Daphne sat alone, was very still.

She had been spinning, but the thread had dropped from her fingers, the spindle lay idle in her lap. The heat and the quietness had made her drowsy, and with her head resting against a pillar she was sound asleep. Suddenly the curtain that divided the courtyard from the passage was lifted, and Cleander tiptoed in.

For a moment he thought there was no one about. Then his eyes fell on the sleeping girl and his face lit up. Stepping softly across the open space, he leaned over and dropped the lightest of kisses on her rounded cheek. Daphne stirred and sighed, slowly opening her eyes. Then with a cry of joy and amazement she sprang up, scattering thread and spindle and flinging herself into Cleander's arms. Her cry brought Agariste running in alarm, and in a moment all was confusion. Laughter and tears were mingled as they

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clung about the truant, plying him with questions and endearments.

"Oh, Cleander," sobbed Agariste, "how could you be so cruel as to go off and leave us as you did, without a word of good-bye?"

Cleander laughed a little awkwardly at that, for indeed, in the prison cell at Smyrna he had more than once regretted it, and blamed himself for leaving his mother without a farewell.

"We thought you were dead, Cleander," said Daphne, "and indeed even yet I can hardly believe that you are flesh and blood and not just a ghost." She smiled at him, but with tears in her eyes.

Then, while Cleander bathed and dressed in a fresh tunic and new soft sandals, Archelous was summoned from the Gymnasium and a messenger was sent to fetch Ameinias and Eunice, and Chlaris who was visiting her sister.

"It was unkind of you," grumbled Ameinias, "to cheat me of so daring an enterprise, and to take Syrion in my place. Where is he, by the way?"

"Over on the island of Salamis hours ago," laughed Cleander, "making arrangements for his marriage to Acte. And father," he added, turning to Archelous and drawing Daphne forward as he spoke, "I want your permission to marry Daphne as soon as may be arranged."

Agariste cried out in surprise, but Archelous smiled fondly at them both.

"I thought you told me you didn't want an Athenian husband, Daphne," he said solemnly.

Daphne blushed and laughed and protested breath-

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lessly that she had meant any Athenian husband except Cleander. So Archelous gave his permission gladly, explaining his joke to the others, and amid much laughter and rejoicing Cleander and Daphne plighted their troth before them all. But when they had all settled down again Archelous' face grew grave.

"We talk cheerfully of marriage," he said, "but these are stern days when no man knows what the end will be. What did you learn in Smyrna, my son?"

Graphically Cleander repeated to them the report he had already delivered to Themistocles the moment he arrived. They hung upon his words, exclaiming in horror as he told of their narrow escape from death.

"Demaratus must have spoken for you," exclaimed Daphne eagerly. "My father always said his banishment was cruel and unjust. It seems as if he still had a love for Greece."

At the description of the passage of Xerxes and his enormous host their faces grew white with dismay, and Agariste cried out wildly, "We are lost, we are lost. What can we do against such myriads?"

She shook Archelous' arm in a panic of fear, declaring that every man of them would be killed, and she and her daughters end their lives miserably as slaves to the cruel Persians.

"Never fear, Mother," was Cleander's bold reply. "We'll stand fast for freedom, and the gods will fight for us as they did at Marathon. Remember, we have Themistocles and the fleet."

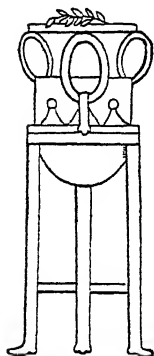
"You're right to put Themistocles first," struck

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in Ameinias, "for he's the spear-head of our defence. Did you hear about the oracle from Delphi?"

"I've heard nothing yet," replied Cleander. "What happened?"

"Well, our envoys set off immediately after you,"



Tripod
of Apollo at
Delphi.

Ameinias told him, "and when they entered the temple at Delphi, before they could speak, the priestess burst out into the most terrible denunciations. 'Wretched men, why sit ye there? Fire and sword in the train of the Syrian chariot shall overwhelm you. Get you away from the sanctuary, your souls steeped in sorrow.'"

"The gods defend us," gasped Cleander, "was there ever such a terrible greeting?"

"Wait, though," protested Ameinias. "Next day they went back in the guise of suppliants and vowed that unless they heard something more hopeful they would never go home alive. So in the end the priestess spoke again, telling them that the wooden wall alone should remain unconquered. Then she ended with the words, 'O divine Salamis, thou too shalt destroy the children of women, either at the seed-time or at the harvest.'"

There was a heavy silence for a moment when Ameinias ceased speaking.

"What did she mean, do you think?" Cleander asked at last in a low voice.

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"At first the people were in a panic," was the reply. "Of course the wooden wall obviously referred to the fleet, but we thought it meant we should be destroyed at sea. Then when every one was shouting this and that, and none knew which way to turn, Themistocles stood up and shouted to us all to listen. He bade us put our faith in the fleet, for if the oracle had meant that we would be defeated it would have said, 'Wretched Salamis' or 'Hateful Salamis' or something like that. But because it said, 'Divine Salamis,' he was convinced that we would win our victory by sea."

Cleander drew a deep breath, and his eyes glowed.

"What a leader," he cried. "How truly Demetrius' father prophesied when he said that Themistocles would do great things for Athens. But go on. What happened next?"

"Well, then we sent an army round by sea to Thessaly to hold the Pass of Tempe against the invaders. You know what the pass is like—just a cutting in the hills with hardly room enough for the road and the river side by side."

"And are they there now?" interrupted Cleander eagerly.

"Well, no," Ameinias' face fell. "The fact is that they discovered there was another road over Mount Olympus, and Alexander of Macedon sent them word that if they stayed where they were they'd be taken in the rear and cut to pieces. So they came home again," he finished gloomily.

"They came home again," breathed Cleander in

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dismay. "Then there's nothing between us and the army of Xerxes? No defence at all?"

"Not at the moment. We've sent to Sparta, though, to ask for a land force to be sent without delay, and we're pushing on the construction and equipment of the fleet as hard as we can. Within the next few weeks we'll have a hundred and thirty vessels ready for sea."

There was silence again, as all sat sombrely thinking of the terrible danger that threatened. At last Archelous spoke.

"I am troubled about this man Cleon," he said. "You say, Cleander, that he knew your name and parentage and how you had been to Sparta. That means he must have an intimate knowledge of Athenian affairs. It seems to me to be of the utmost importance that we should discover who he is."

"Tell us again what he was like," urged Ameinias.

"Short and thick-set," answered Cleander, "with a square-jawed face and heavy black hair half hiding a scar on his left temple."

Eunice gave a sudden quick exclamation of surprise and they all turned to look at her. A flush of excitement had risen in her usually pale face.

"I think I can help you," she exclaimed. "Do you remember the dinner-party that was held here the night Ameinias and Cleander came home from Sparta? While you were at dinner I slipped into the loom-room to get some threads for my embroidery, and just as I was coming out of the door a man ran right into me. He was looking over his shoulder and didn't see me. I don't know which of

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us got the bigger fright. Well, the description Cleander has given us of this man Cleon exactly fits him."

There was a babel of excited questions, but Archelous held up his hand for silence and Eunice went on:

"I asked who he was and what he wanted, and he said he was the servant of the noble Demetrius, and was seeking the way to the slaves' quarters. So I showed him the door and watched him go."

"But Eunice," protested Cleander, "why didn't you tell us this at the time?"

"Well it didn't seem at all important," apologized Eunice. "It all seemed quite natural and harmless."

"Eunice is right," said Archelous gravely. "There was no reason why she should have told us, or suspected any harm. But we must now make this known to Themistocles. It may give us a clue to the traitors within the city."

"Of course it does, father," shouted Cleander excitedly. "It points straight to the family of Demetrius. Wasn't it from them you got Damon to put in charge of the olive-garden? They must be the traitors."

"Softly, softly," interrupted Archelous, as the two young men sprang up. "We must not be too precipitate. Take this news to Themistocles and see what he advises. After all, the fact that they have had two slaves who have turned traitor is not enough evidence on which to accuse a family so rich and influential."

"Demetrius has always mocked at the things I

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cared for," complained Cleander. "Even before Marathon he was sure the Athenians would be defeated. Come along, Ameinias, we'll go together to Themistocles."

Ameinias gave his slow smile. "So we're into this enterprise together again—brother?" he queried. "That's as it should be." And the two went off side by side to carry their news to the general.

For two months they worked together at the feverish preparations now being made for the defences of Greece against Xerxes. Ship after ship was fitted out, and put to sea to join the fleet that was gradually assembling off the coast of Attica. Frenzied appeals to the neighbouring cities and islands brought much-needed reinforcements, though the more distant colonies, like Sicily and Corcyra, sent nothing more concrete than fair words and dubious promises. From Megara, however, from Corinth and Aegina, from Troezen and the smaller islands round about, triremes and penteconters¹ came sailing in, daily adding to the shipping that crowded every bay and harbour.

From time to time news would come in from northern Greece—news of the wonderful bridge across the Hellespont by which the whole invading army crossed that stormy water dry-shod. Then came news of the great review at Doriskus when Xerxes, having reviewed from his chariot the forty-six nations that made up his army, embarked upon a Sidonian galley and inspected the fleet; news of the desertion to Xerxes of the people of Thessaly, angered by the

¹ A ship with fifty oars.

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withdrawal of the force that had been sent to Tempe to protect them. As each fresh bit of news came in, terror and dismay spread among the people of Attica.

Through all this the courage and determination of Themistocles and his helpers never faltered. By word and deed they kept up the sinking spirits of the common people, giving them work to do, so that they might feel themselves part of the heroic defence that was preparing. All other interests were put firmly behind them, and when the Olympic Festival opened that year there were no Athenians among either contestants or spectators. The very existence of Greece was at stake, and Athens was her bulwark.

At last came the news that Xerxes had reached Therma with both his army and fleet, meeting with no resistance. On the contrary, each province that he passed through hastened to make its submission, some of them even supplying reinforcements to the already enormous army, as well as contributing to its maintenance.

Then one day Ameinias and Cleander, going out to a little hill beyond Athens, saw in the distance a cloud of dust advancing. A group of small boys had followed them, and now, turning to them, Cleander shouted, "Quick. Run to the market-place. Tell every one you meet that the Spartans are here."

Like arrows from a bow two of the lads sped away with the good news, while the others waited impatiently, hands shading their eyes against the glare, watching the cloud draw nearer. Soon in the thick of it spear-tip and shield flashed back the sun's rays like a secret heliograph signalling its message

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of hope and succour. Then the tramp of feet beat rhythmically on the noontide silence. By the time the boys came back, a motley crowd streaming after them, the Spartan force had reached the point where the little group stood waiting.

At their head marched Leonidas the king, head and shoulders above all the rest, and with a stern handsome face under his lofty crested helmet. With him he had brought three hundred picked troops from Sparta, all men of experience, who left behind them sons to fill their places. There were also three thousand soldiers from other cities that he had passed through on his journey north. A bold and gallant company they looked, and it was with the greatest pride and delight that the Athenians marched along beside them to the city.

What a welcome they were given! The ten generals in full robes of office received Leonidas and the commanders of the other contingents in the great Council Hall, feasting them lavishly and going all together to the Temple of Athene to offer prayers and sacrifices for victory. The citizens vied with each other in showing kindness and hospitality to these strangers who were to stand between Athens and the invaders. Two of the Spartans, Pythias and Hilarion, who had been at school with Ameinias and Cleander, came home to dinner at Archelous's house.

"Where will you make your stand, Pythias?" asked Cleander, when they had talked enough about old times and the changes since the two Athenians had left Sparta.

"We're going to Thermopylae," was the reply.

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"They say it's practically impregnable, with high hills on one side and marshes on the other. There's a sort of curve in the hills where we can camp, but at each end the road's so narrow that chariots can only pass in single file. As far as I can tell we should be able to hold them there for months. They'll probably see it's hopeless and go home again, unless the fleet gets round and takes us in the rear. That's your business, of course."

"I know," agreed Cleander eagerly. "We're sending the fleet up to Artemisium, just opposite Thermopylae. It's an ideal spot for defence between Euboea and the mainland. We'll hold them, never fear. Though I must say I wish Themistocles were in command."

"Why isn't he?" asked Hilarion.

"Some of the allies wanted to serve under a Spartan," exclaimed Ameinias, "so although we've sent easily the largest number of ships, we agreed to waive our rights and let Eurybiades be in command."

"That's very generous of you," said Hilarion, but it was clear that he thought it was just as it should be. Then, rising, he buckled on his belt and lifted his helmet. Pythias also rose.

"Good-bye," they said. "May the gods defend us all and drive these barbarians to perdition. We must get back to camp."

By morning they were gone, marching away northward to take up their position in the narrow Pass of Thermopylae, there to abide whatever fate the gods might send.

On the following day the fleet left its harbours

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and sailed up the Euboean Strait to Artemisium. With it went Ameinias and Cleander, but to their great sorrow not together.

"I'm sorry, Cleander," Themistocles told him, "but you must go in the trireme of Phormus. Demetrius is serving on her and you must go to keep an eye on him. We can't spread our suspicions abroad, so no one else will do. You'll have Syrion to help you, and at the slightest hint of treachery you must act, either on your own or by an appeal to Phormus. Good luck, and may you unmask the traitor."

So Cleander and Syrion joined the trireme *Hercules*, while Ameinias commanded their old vessel, the *Maiden Queen*. And before they left, quietly, without presents or feasting or torchlight procession because of the danger of the times, Cleander and Daphne became husband and wife.



CHAPTER XIII

ABOARD THE "HERCULES"

It was an easy journey up the narrow strait to Artemisium, and a day or so after the Spartans took up their position at Thermopylae the fleet was also in its place.

When dawn broke on the morning after their arrival, Cleander was standing at the prow of the *Hercules*, his face to the east, eager to welcome the first appearance of the sun and to offer a libation to Apollo. Faintly against the sky he could make out the nearer hills of the island of Euboea on his right hand. Under their lee the Greek fleet lay at anchor, and as the first shafts of gold shot upwards from the eastern horizon there arose from them the chant that accompanied the morning sacrifice.

Cleander joined in the chant, then poured his libation to the gods, and turning, came face to face with Demetrius. The two had greeted each other without enthusiasm when they met again after so many years. Demetrius was still very much the wealthy young man-about-town, and treated his old schoolfellow with a lofty patronage that infuriated Cleander—all the more because of his doubts of Demetrius' loyalty. Demetrius commanded the

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soldiers on board the *Hercules*, while Cleander was attached to Phormus the trirarch as a kind of secretary.

"Offering sacrifices to Apollo?" drawled Demetrius now, in the tone of an indulgent superior. "Quite right. One can't be too careful these days. By the way, a messenger has come from Eurybiades. You'd better go and see what he wants."

Cleander gave an exclamation of annoyance and hurried aft, but the messenger was already with Phormus, and he had to wait as patiently as possible till he was summoned.

Phormus, a grizzled sea-captain of many years' experience, was smiling rather grimly over his orders.

"We put to sea at once," he said brusquely. "Bid the captain prepare his men and the ship-master get the oars out."

"Is it the whole fleet, sir," asked Cleander, "or just ourselves?"

"Three of us," was the reply. "One from Troezen, one from Aegina, and ourselves. We're going out as scouts to see if we can make contact with the enemy fleet."

Soon the vessel sprang to life, with hurrying of feet, shouting of orders, creak of timbers, and rattle of arms. Then above all came the steady thud of the boatswain's mallet as he gave the time to the rowers and the great blades struck the water in perfect unison.

The three triremes drew out from the shelter of the Euboean Strait and moved slowly northwards, questing their way along the coast. All day they

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sailed without sighting the enemy, and at night sheltered in a little creek where the crews went ashore to stretch their legs and snare a few rabbits to eke out their "iron rations." In the morning a silvery mist clung around the boles of the trees, trailing in shining wisps across the water, and through it they put to sea again.

It was late that afternoon that the look-out at the mast-head shouted "Sail-ho!" Almost at the same moment the Aeginean trireme, which was abreast of the Athenian but further from the shore, signalled that she had also sighted the enemy. Hurried preparations had to be made, for the Persians had evidently sighted the Greek ships first and were bearing down on them swiftly.

There were ten of the Persian ships, several of them bigger than any of the Greek vessels, so it was evident that all they could do would be to sell their lives dearly, damaging their opponents as much as possible in the unequal struggle. In his cabin Phormus donned helmet and breastplate, and lifting his spear and shield, signed to Cleander to follow him on deck.

As they emerged he cast an anxious look towards the land.

"We're too near the shore, Cleander," he shouted over his shoulder. "How can we get room to manœuvre? Tell the helmsman to put her beak out a point or two."

Before they reached the poop, however, they found themselves caught up in a scene of utter confusion. The soldiers and the deck-hands were running hither

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and thither, unarmed and panic-stricken, wailing out that all was lost.

"May the Furies seize these mad men," roared Phormus, striking out with his spear to try to stop the turmoil. "Men of Athens, what is the meaning of this rioting? To arms and to your stations, the enemy are here."

Forcing a way through the crowd he reached the poop ladder, Cleander close on his heels, and sprang up it. At the top he came face to face with Demetrius and roared at him furiously:

"You fool, you are supposed to be in command of these men. What does this mean? Why don't you get them to their stations? Is your authority so feeble that you let them flout you like this?"

Demetrius smiled faintly and shrugged his shoulders.

"They realize the hopeless odds, captain," he protested languidly. "If they wish to surrender, should I stop them?"

"Surrender!" Phormus's face was crimson with fury. "An Athenian trireme surrender because of the odds against her? You must be mad—or drunk."

He turned to the head of the ladder and shouted at the top of his voice. The crowd in the waist of the ship looked up and stopped their aimless scurrying.

"Remember Marathon," roared Phormus. "Let us stand fast as free-born Greeks should do against the barbarian. To arms and to your stations."

But the wealth of the house of Demetrius was notorious, and it had been poured out lavishly when the captain recruited these men. They looked up at Demetrius for guidance, and he raised a languid hand.

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"Nothing but death or slavery is to be won by fighting these ten Persian vessels," he declared. "Surrender, and you will be received with honour. I myself will speak for you with the sons of Peisistratus and you shall receive rewards and security under the Persian banner."

Phormus and Cleander listened with eyes agape to this extraordinary speech. Then Phormus turned savagely on Demetrius.

"Traitor," he shouted, and raised his spear, but before he could strike, an arrow whizzed up from the deck below, piercing through his throat where his helmet, unfastened, left it unprotected. There was a wild shout from the mutineers below, and they made a rush forward as the body of their commander crashed down the ladder to their feet.

All happened so suddenly that Cleander had no time to intervene. Now, seeing Phormus fall, he spun round to face Demetrius, and in turning his eye caught a glimpse of the white surf breaking on the beach only a few hundred yards away. The helmsman, intent on the scene before him, was blind to everything else.

Instantly it flashed into Cleander's brain what he must do. As Demetrius came towards him, an ugly smile on his scornful face, Cleander let drive with his right fist and caught him full on the point of the jaw. Like a log he crashed on the deck, and in the instant before his followers realized what had happened Cleander flung himself with his full weight on the helmsman. The man went over like a ninepin and Cleander jammed the helm hard round.

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As the ship answered to the helm a shout rose from the rowers below decks. They knew nothing of what was happening above their heads, and supposed the sounds of shouting and of running feet to be the preparations for the coming fight. Now they were bewildered and dismayed as the ship heeled over in turning, lifting the starboard oars clean out of the water, and burying the port oars to the depth of the blades. Carried forward by her own momentum, by wind and by current, the *Hercules* plunged through the surf, and in a moment was bumping and scraping over the rocks that lay between her and the shore. At last one jagged reef standing higher than the rest spitted her on its black fangs and held her there.

Now indeed the confusion of a few moments earlier was as nothing. Up from below decks scrambled the rowers, shouting that the ship's bottom was riddled like a sieve and the water knee-deep already. They added to the panic and terror on deck, and since every man had now but one thought, and that to save himself, they began to leap overboard, some swimming, some clinging to boxes or spars, in a frantic effort to reach the shore.

From their position on the lower deck the mutineers had not been able to see clearly what happened to the helmsman, but they had seen Demetrius fall, so when a few of them clambered up the ladder to the poop they made straight for Cleander. Even as they flung themselves on him in fury, however, they felt the shuddering grind of the ship's timbers as she struck. Forgetting revenge in the dire danger that threatened them, they turned away again, leaving their victim.

panting and ruffled but unhurt, and scurried away to save themselves as best they might.

Here, then, on the poop, Syrion found Cleander when at last he managed to shoulder his way through the crowd below the ladder. His eyes fell on the unconscious forms of Demetrius and the helmsman, and then on Cleander, helmetless and dark with rage.

"Cleander," he exclaimed, "what's happened? Have the gods smitten every one with madness?"

"Phormus, Syrion," Cleander gasped hoarsely, "did you see Phormus? Is he dead?"

"Ay, he's dead, all right," replied Syrion wonderingly. "What treachery is here?"

Together they peered over the bulwarks and saw the black dots that were the heads of swimmers, and little groups on the shore running to and fro hauling the later arrivals out of the waves. Nobody seemed to be remembering them, and it seemed wisest to stay where they were for the time being. In hurried sentences Cleander sketched for Syrion the events that had led to this tragic ending.

"So Demetrius was the traitor after all," exclaimed Syrion. "Why didn't you kill him?"

"I wish I had," retorted Cleander savagely. "I wish I'd killed him on the spot, but I can't do it now when he's unconscious. Anyway, he ought to go back to Athens and stand his trial. This is a public wrong, not a private quarrel."

"You're too scrupulous, Cleander," protested Syrion half angrily, "but I suppose you're right."

By this time the ship was empty, and all the survivors who had reached land safely had straggled

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off into the woods in search of food and shelter. The helmsman sat up unsteadily and Syrion went over to him.

"Keep quiet," he commanded, "and do as you're told, and no harm will come to you. Make one move to disobey this officer's orders and I'll stick my dagger into you."

The man, an Ionian from Cos, accepted the situation meekly. One master was as good as another to him.

In their excitement they had almost forgotten the larger battle in which they should have been taking part, but now Cleander called Syrion over to him and they gazed out over the stern of the *Hercules* to where the other two Greek triremes had engaged the Persians. Straining their eyes, they watched the progress of the struggle, but the end was sure before ever it began. Faintly the clash of battle was carried to their ears across the water, but at last it died away. The Persian ships turned northward, leaving two half-submerged hulks to disappear slowly among the floating debris.

Cleander groaned aloud as he watched them go.

"There go our friends, if they are left alive. And there goes all chance of carrying a warning to the fleet at Artemisium. Well, the gods must intervene if Athens is to be saved, for we can do nothing now."

A sharp splash interrupted him, and springing round, they saw at once that Demetrius was gone. The helmsman still sat disconsolately against the rudder post, and Syrion sprang across to him.

"Where's Demetrius?" he shouted, and as the

man looked up uncomprehendingly, he pointed to the deck and shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Where's the man that was lying there?"

"He got up, sir, and then he looked around for a moment, and then he jumped over the side."

Syrion dropped his arm, and he and Cleander rushed to the side. Sure enough, there was Demetrius swimming strongly through the breaking surf. They watched him wade ashore at last, and then he turned and waved an arm mockingly towards the ship before disappearing into the woods.

A bigger wave than usual broke against the quivering timbers of the *Hercules* and she heeled over suddenly, throwing all three men into a heap against the starboard bulwark.

"Come on, Syrion, it's time to go," laughed Cleander, as they struggled to rise on the sloping deck. "The mutineers will be far enough on their way for us to cut round and avoid meeting them. We must get back to Athens and tell the generals what's happened. Time enough then to catch Demetrius and bring him to justice."

One after the other they plunged overboard, and with strong strokes breasted the waves that broke over them in clouds of foam. Avoiding the rocks as well as they could—though here and there a jagged tooth would tear at their clothing or their skin—they found the sand at last under their feet and staggered out of the froth at the water's edge on to dry land. Involuntarily Cleander turned and looked back, just in time to see the *Hercules* heel over, her curved side glistening in the evening light, and to hear the crash

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of her timbers as she broke up under the fierce onslaught of the waves.

Turning away with a sigh, he led the way into the woods. They must make for Thessaly and the road to Athens by a wide detour that would carry them safely round the army of Xerxes where it lay encamped before Thermopylae.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FATE OF ATHENS

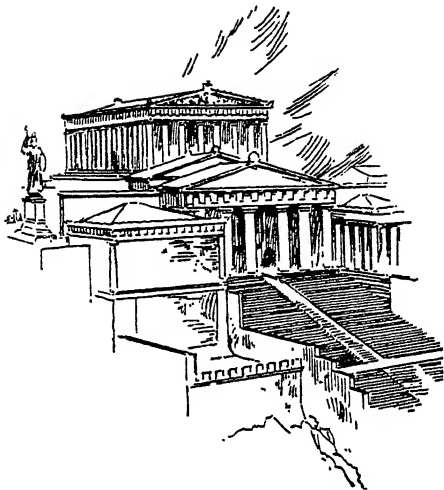
WHEN at last, weary, footsore, and grimed with the dust of travel, the three fugitives crossed the border into Attica, it was to find that country almost entirely empty of inhabitants. Farm-houses and cottages stood empty ; crops ripened ungathered in the fields ; the fruit trees dropped their burden unheeded from laden boughs.

"What can have happened, Cleander ? " questioned Syryon. "I thought we should find the people hard at work securing the harvest behind the safe bulwark of the Spartan army."

"There's something very far wrong," agreed his companion. "The people are crazy if they've flocked into the city in a panic. How do they suppose they'll get fed if there's no one left in the fields ? Athens can never feed such numbers."

Steadily they trudged on, looking anxiously and vainly for any sign of normal activity in the fields and orchards as they passed. On the afternoon of the second day they came in sight of Athens, the Acropolis rising bravely above the clustering houses, and the blue peaks of Hymettus in the distance. Involuntarily they paused to drink in the lovely scene.

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They came in sight of Athens.

“There was a young poet from Thebes at my father’s table recently,” said Cleander at last. “He sang a beautiful ode about Athens, but I can remember only a few lines of it—something about ‘the gleaming and the violet-crowned, and the sung in story; the bulwark of Hellas, city divine.’ How true that is, Syrion.”

He was silent for a few moments. Then as they began their weary march again he added: “We are on the winning side after all, no matter what happens. I feel in my heart that the spirit of Athens is indestructible. Even if that dear city should be razed to the ground, her spirit will rise again from the

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ashes to hold aloft the torch of freedom and beauty for all time."

The look of exaltation faded from his face, and he set his shoulders more squarely.

"But first we may have to go through the fire," he finished.

As they drew nearer the city they began to overtake little groups of fugitives taking the same road. Old men and women hobbled along, leaning on their sticks, their eyes full of pain and bewilderment at this sudden uprooting. Women with babies in their arms and children clinging tearfully to their skirts plodded through the dust. Boys and girls were driving a cow or two or a herd of goats, or carrying a basket full of squawking poultry. Some had little hand-carts loaded with household gear or clothing.

"What's happened?" the young men shouted to one group. "Where are you going?"

"To Athens," replied a sturdy woman whose left arm supported her old father, while in her right she carried a baby a few months old. "The generals have sent messengers all over Attica bidding us leave our homes and come to Athens with what goods we can carry. Xerxes is coming."

"But why? Why?" urged Cleander. "What of the Spartan army at Thermopylae and the fleet at Artemisium?"

"I know naught about that," said the woman; "only I did hear tell that the Spartans are all dead, wherever they are."

Gloom descended upon Cleander and Syron after that, and they hurried on, not stopping to question

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or look for news, bent only on getting to the city as soon as possible.

The nearer they came to the city gates, the thicker grew the crowd, till at last they were pushing their way through a medley of panic-stricken folk and frightened animals. At last, however, they were through the gate and into the main street.

Here there were equal signs of panic and of hurried departure: house-doors standing open to reveal empty halls and vacant rooms; heaps of luggage piled at the side of the road; children standing guard over baskets of food and clothing. As the new arrivals pushed their way through the throng a sound of marching feet and men's voices singing in chorus drew steadily nearer, and they had to stand aside to make room for a company of cavalry. They were led by Kimon, Miltiades' son.

"Where are you off to?" shouted Cleander.

"To the Acropolis," shouted back Kimon, "to dedicate our bridles to Apollo. We are to ride the waves now, instead of our horses."

They passed on, and the two young men hurried on their way.

"Something terrible must have happened," groaned Cleander. "It's evident that Leonidas has been defeated; but what about the Spartan army that was to follow and support him? This is awful."

At last they reached the Street of Apollo, almost running in their eagerness to get home. Outside the door of Archelous' house stood a mule-cart laden with household stuff, and on top sat Chlaris, white-faced and trembling, and with eyes red with weeping. At

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sight of her brother she almost fell from her perch, calling frantically to the others to come quickly, for here was Cleander back from the dead.

Lifting her down, Cleander carried her into the house, where the others crowded round to welcome him with tears of joy. But what a scene of confusion met his gaze! The house had been stripped of everything movable, and only the bare walls and a few large baskets remained. This transformation, too, was hardly greater than the change in his family. Archelous and Ameinias were both in uniform, but both looked worn and anxious, and Archelous bore for the first time the look of an old man. Agariste's fair prettiness had all disappeared, and she looked drawn and haggard, her soft robe soiled and her hair in disarray. Eunice and Daphne too bore the marks of toil and anxiety, and though she tried to smile bravely at Cleander, Daphne clung to his arm, trembling as she had never done but on the terrible night of her father's death.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed at last. "For heaven's sake tell us what is the meaning of all this."

"It means we've got to evacuate Athens," said Ameinias heavily. "The Spartans at Thermopylae were betrayed. They died to the last man. With Thermopylae open the fleet couldn't hold Artemisium. We fought the Persians twice, and thanks to the intervention of the gods, who sent a storm that destroyed a third of their ships, we did a lot of damage. But we couldn't hold the strait, so we fell back. We were to go to Troezen, but Themistocles persuaded Eury-

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biades to stop at Salamis to help us to take our families to a place of safety. So now you know why the country's empty. Athens is doomed."

At this tragic tale the women burst into tears again, and Agariste wailed aloud:

"O that I should have lived to see this day! It is as I said. No one can stand against Xerxes. You will all be killed, and I and my daughters sold into slavery."

Cleander's face was white, and his mouth seemed so parched and dry that he could not speak. The whole room seemed to be whirling round him. Then from very far away he heard a voice say, "Water, quickly. He is faint with hunger and weariness."

At this the women forgot for a moment the danger that hung over them, and set to work to supply the travellers with food and drink. These were necessarily of the simplest, but they served to revive them, and while they ate, Archelous explained more fully what had happened.

He told of the heroic defence that Leonidas and his army had put up, holding Xerxes at bay so gallantly that even his picked troops, the famous Immortals, could not dislodge them from the pass. Then came the sad tale of treachery, the Persians creeping in the darkness up the narrow mountain path, surprising and overpowering the Phocian detachment set to guard it. There was no hope then, and when a scout brought the news to Leonidas, he sent back all his army to a place of safety. Only he and his three hundred Spartans refused to retreat. Their honour demanded that they should hold the pass to the death,

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since that was the injunction laid upon them by Sparta. The gallant Thespians refused to leave Leonidas, preferring to die along with him. And so they did, to the last man, for none came alive out of the terrible battle in the pass.

"Our one hope now is in our ships," Archelous concluded. "The Peloponnesians are very busy building a wall across the Isthmus at Corinth, but that's pure waste of time. If Xerxes had no fleet it might serve, but once he has command of the sea their wall is so much useless mud. Our fate is certain. Athens will be destroyed. But we may yet save the rest of Greece."

"Where are you taking Mother and the girls to?" asked Cleander.

"To Salamis," answered Archelous. "I'm sorry, Syron, but they'll all have to squeeze into that little farm of yours somehow. I sent word to Acte and Strephon yesterday, and as soon as you've eaten your fill you'd better go down with the household stuff and get across in a fishing-boat. Ameinias is taking us all across in the *Maiden Queen* along with a crowd of others who want to stay near at hand. Most of the women and children have gone either to Aegina or to Troezen, but Salamis is better for us."

"You go ahead, then," said Cleander, feeling his strength come back to him, "and I'll follow, after I've seen Themistocles. I've got to report to him what happened to the *Hercules*. Demetrius was the traitor sure enough, and he caused a mutiny and let them kill Phormus. But I'll tell you all about it when we've more time."

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Kissing his mother and Daphne, he hurried off in search of Themistocles, leaving Ameinias and Archelous to convey the women safely over to Salamis as quickly as they could.

Day and night the bitter task went on, old men, women, and children being uprooted from their homes, their livelihood abandoned, going out to find refuge and charity among strangers. In Aegina and Troezen the people welcomed these refugees kindly and generously. They took them into their houses and voted money from public funds for their maintenance. But all this could only alleviate, it could not heal the wound that such an uprooting caused in the hearts of the Athenians.

For five days after the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions the exodus continued. On the sixth all was over. Xerxes and his army marched into Athens and the smoke of her burning rolled in angry clouds across the ravaged countryside. Athens went up in flames, the reflection of which shone even as far as the little farms on the island of Salamis, and the bay where the Greek fleet lay at anchor. Marathon was avenged.

Meanwhile among the Greek forces confusion reigned. They had not meant to take Salamis as their new position, but had paused there only to act as a screen behind which the Athenians could carry out the evacuation of their city. Now, the Persian fleet having sailed into Phalerum and the Piraeus, they must decide whether to stay, or go elsewhere. In this dilemma, Eurybiades the admiral called a council of the leaders of the various contingents

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to consider what they should do. To this debate came Themistocles, representing the two hundred Athenian ships, and bringing with him Cleander as his attendant.

For several hours the argument lasted, but finally an agreement was reached and the company broke up.

"Shall I go with you, sir, to the flag-ship?" Cleander asked.

The older man looked anxious and disheartened, and shook his head impatiently.

"No, no," he replied. "Get back to your own ship. You're on the *Maiden Queen* with Ameinias, aren't you? Keep a man on the look-out, and if I want you I'll signal for you. Good-night, lad. It seems our cause is doomed after all."

On board the *Maiden Queen* Ameinias greeted Cleander with anxious eagerness.

"Well, what is it to be?" he demanded. "Fight or run?"

"Run," responded Cleander gloomily. Then he burst out angrily: "Of all the selfish, obstinate fools that ever I met, the Peloponnesians are the worst. It's bad enough that the army they promised us to support Leonidas never arrived because of the Karneian Games. Now that they've thrown Athens to the wolves their one thought is to save themselves. They demand an immediate retreat to the Isthmus where we can make contact with the land forces behind their precious wall."

"But that's absurd," exclaimed Ameinias. "This strait here is a far better fighting-ground for us,

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outnumbered as we are. And besides, if we retreat to the isthmus that leaves Megara and Aegina unprotected."

"I know, I know," retorted Cleander irritably. "Themistocles told them that over and over again. If we leave Salamis the fleet will fall to pieces, for each contingent will have to go off to defend its own city. But they don't care. The Corinthians especially think they're safe behind the wall, and don't care who has to be sacrificed."

For several hours the two young men argued, discussing the situation from every possible angle. Whichever way they looked at it, the retreat to the isthmus seemed to sound the death knell of all their hopes. Suddenly there was a knock at the door of the cabin, and the sentry's voice called Cleander by name.

"The Athenian admiral signalling for your immediate presence on the flag-ship of Eurybiades," he announced.

Cleander's face brightened. "Perhaps all's not lost, after all," he exclaimed, and, snatching up his helmet, went off on the heels of the watchman.

He met Themistocles at the foot of the ladder leading to Eurybiades' ship, and murmured a hurried question.

"I found my old friend Mnesiphilus waiting for me when I got back," replied Themistocles, "and with the help of his arguments I've managed to persuade Eurybiades to reconsider his decision."

At the top of the ladder they found a group of captains, all tired and harassed, and rather angry

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at being thus summoned again to a debate they had already finished with. All were inclined to be irritable and none more so than Adeimantus, the captain of the Corinthian contingent. He was a middle-aged man, stout and pompous, with a heavy determined jaw and rather bulging eyes. He was closely wrapped in a thick cloak against the cold night air, and reminded Cleander of a sulky bear.

The two Athenians joined the group, and Themistocles eagerly began again expounding his views, and the strong arguments in favour of remaining where they were. Suddenly from the depths of the dark cloak an angry voice rumbled forth.

"Themistocles," it said, "those who in the public festival-matches rise up before the proper signal are scourged."

"True," flashed back the Athenian, "but those who lag behind the signal win no crowns."

With this inauspicious beginning to the discussion they entered the admiral's cabin. There Eurybiades explained that he had begun to doubt the wisdom of the retreat to the isthmus, and had called them back to discuss it further. At once an angry clamour arose, but Themistocles, springing to his feet, silenced them with a gesture and launched into an impassioned speech, pleading with them to stay in the Straits of Salamis, where they had a natural vantage ground, and where the Delphic Oracle had already promised them victory.

When he had finished there were some murmurs of doubt and dissent, but many of the captains were wavering. Then, with the look and bearing of

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an outraged turkey-cock, Adeimantus got to his feet.

"Fellow captains," he exclaimed, "why will you listen to this madman? What right has he to speak? Have we not all seen the flames of Athens reddening the clouds? Then how can he, who has no free city to represent, have a voice in our deliberations? He should not even have a vote—a homeless wanderer without a city—a vagabond, no more."

He sat down abruptly, and most of the other captains looked down uncomfortably, keenly conscious of the baseness and boorishness of this attack on the leader of more than half the fleet. It provoked an instant retort from Themistocles.

"Very well, sir," he shouted, jumping to his feet. "Retreat to the isthmus if you will, but I warn you here and now that no Athenian ship goes with you. We shall sail away, as our fathers have done time and again, to far-off shores, and there build ourselves a city and found a colony. And you may sink or swim, as best you can, without us."

This dire threat, made with every sign of determination by so valiant a leader, was enough to turn the scales. Without further argument, not even putting the matter to the vote, Eurybiades made his decision.

"We will await the conflict here at Salamis," he commanded, "and may the gods defend our cause and fulfil their promise to the Athenians."

So the meeting broke up, and the captains separated to their ships to prepare for what the new day might bring.

CHAPTER XV

SALAMIS

ALL the next day an atmosphere of uncertainty and uneasiness hung over the Greek fleet. There was no sign of an attack by the Persians, and the Greeks had no intention of moving out to provoke one. All day the little rowing-boats dodged in and out among the triremes as captains and officers went to and fro discussing the situation. In the late afternoon Themistocles came on board the *Maiden Queen*. Anxiety and want of sleep had drawn dark rings round his eyes, but otherwise he was the same as ever—handsome, confident, and debonair. He had a high opinion of both Ameinias and Cleander, and came to find out what they thought of the present deadlock.

“There was a mutiny among the Corinthian ships this morning,” he announced, as he sat down on the couch in Ameinias’ cabin. “I don’t know how Adeimantus quelled it, but I’ve a suspicion that he promised to retreat, after all.”

“Messengers came from the isthmus at dawn,” replied Ameinias. “They probably brought fresh appeals from the land forces.”

They talked quietly for a few minutes. Then

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suddenly there was a noise of shouting and of trampling feet on the deck above. All three sprang to their feet, and the next moment the door of the cabin was flung open to reveal a crowd of captains, headed by Eurybiades and Adeimanthus.

"Ah, here you are, Themistocles," exclaimed the admiral in a tone of relief. He looked much more haggard and drawn than the Athenian leader, and was obviously very much harassed by his voluble companions.

They surged into the cabin, arguing, protesting, complaining, till the little room was soon filled to overflowing.

"Sirs," exclaimed Ameinias in a thunderous tone that Cleander had never heard him use before, "this is neither a fish-market nor a wrestling-match. Will you be seated, and our admiral will preside, so that all may be done decently and in order."

Somewhat abashed by this rebuke, the visitors hastily sank on to such seats as were available, including the couch from which Themistocles had risen. When all were seated, Ameinias drew Cleander outside the door.

"Will you stand guard, Cleander," he begged. "This is my ship, and I mean to join the debate, but I don't want any one eavesdropping, nor any one interrupting us unannounced."

"To be sure I will," said Cleander with a grin. "You don't mind my eavesdropping, I suppose?"

Ameinias smiled back, then slipped into the cabin and closed the door.

The late afternoon sunshine was streaming down

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through the opening from the deck, making a pool of golden light at Cleander's feet. Gradually it went gliding up the ladder, then disappeared, and the soft grey of evening took its place. A single star swam into view. And still the debate went on.

Suddenly the door of the cabin opened and Themistocles came out. His fingers gripped Cleander's arm so fiercely that they sank into the flesh, and he pulled him aside into the shadow of a beam.

"Cleander," he whispered, his voice hoarse with the strain he had been putting on it, "our fate hangs by a thread. Those fools in there are determined to make for the isthmus, after all. If they do, our cause is lost. The fleet will break up, each to defend its own city, and Xerxes will swallow them piecemeal. There is one chance, one slender chance, of forcing them to fight here. You must carry a message for me, but first swear that you will keep this a secret for ever."

Quivering with excitement and eagerness, Cleander gave his oath, and Themistocles, putting his lips close to the younger man's ear, whispered his instructions.

"Go to my ship," he commanded, "and seek out the slave Sikinnus. Bid him swim across the strait to Phalerum, and take this message to Xerxes. 'The Greeks are in confusion and disagreement, wavering on the verge of flight. Do not let them slip through your fingers.' If he can but convince the Persians that that is the truth, there will be no chance of retreating to the isthmus. Go now, and when Sikinnus comes back, bring me word."

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As Cleander sped off on his errand he had time to wonder afresh at the infinite courage and resource of this man who had risen up to lead the Athenians in their moment of greatest danger. The boldness of this new plan took his breath away, and he shuddered to think what Themistocles' fate would be if it miscarried and the rest of the Greeks got to hear of it. Desperate danger required desperate stratagems, but this, if the Greeks were defeated, would seem nothing short of basest treachery.

Sikinnus was easily found and despatched upon his errand, slipping into the dark water as noiselessly as an eel. The strait was here only about a quarter of a mile broad, no great distance for a good swimmer. Cleander waited on Themistocles' ship, every nerve taut, every sense alert, until at last a shadow appeared over the gunwale and Sikinnus stood beside him on the deck, his wet body gleaming in the starlight.

"All's well, sir," he whispered. "I vowed myself a traitor and a runaway (may the gods forgive me) and they drank in my every word. They are determined that we shall not give them the slip. Before morning they will have closed the strait at both ends and we'll have to fight our way out."

With a nod of approval Cleander swung himself over the side again, and rowed back to the *Maiden Queen*. At his knock on the cabin door Themistocles came out.

"All's well, sir," Cleander reported, just as Sikinnus had done. "The strait will be closed before morning."

Themistocles nodded silently and closed the door

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again. It was now to his interest to keep the discussion dragging on as long as possible, no very difficult task when every man held a different opinion from his neighbour and was determined to voice it. Cleander remained on guard at the door.

Suddenly a quick firm step sounded on the deck, and a man in full armour came down the ladder. He was tall and handsome, with a strong, rather sad face, and grave steady eyes.

"Is Themistocles here?" he demanded, in the tone of one accustomed to command.

"Yes, sir," said Cleander. "Both he and Eurybiades are in the cabin."

"Ask Themistocles to speak to me," commanded the stranger, and Cleander did as he was told. The Athenian captain came out in some surprise, but seeing who stood outside he hurried forward.

"Aristeides," he exclaimed. "In good time, my friend—or should I say, my enemy? Athens is in dire straits and needs you sorely."

Aristeides smiled gravely.

"Once there was not room in Athens for us both," he said. "You were successful and I was banished. But I believe it is to you that I now owe my recall."

He paused, and Themistocles bowed slightly but did not speak.

"I give you thanks with all my heart for that. Now in the hour of danger to our city may our only rivalry be to see who shall serve her best. I hear there is dissension in the council?"

"Dissension," Themistocles laughed rather bitterly. "Say, rather, civil war. We are for fighting here at

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Salamis, but the majority are for a retreat to the isthmus. What do you say?"

"There can be no retreat to the isthmus," said Aristеides calmly. "The ship on which I came from Aegina has only just escaped the clutches of the Persians. They have closed the strait. There can be no retreat."

Themistocles' face lit up as he eagerly questioned Aristеides, then led him into the cabin to tell the news himself and so convince the other captains.

For a time all was commotion and hubbub, but at last peace was restored. Now that there was no ~~question~~ of retreat, ~~there was~~ but one purpose in the minds of all—to fight with every ounce of strength and valour, and to defeat the Persians if the gods would so order the battle. With this firm resolve the meeting broke up, and the captains went off to prepare both ships and men for the coming struggle.

Morning found the two fleets drawn up in readiness, the Greeks in the little Bay of Salamis, the Persians along the shores of the mainland and blocking both ends of the strait. On a rocky promontory above the main Persian fleet a handsome throne had been erected for Xerxes. From there he could watch the struggle, scribes at his side to make a note of those of his subjects who showed the most outstanding valour and prowess. Under that eagle eye the Persian fleet could not fail to surpass all its earlier achievements.

There was, however, one difference between the two fleets besides their size. The Greeks, forewarned, were quite undismayed when daylight revealed the

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Xerxes watching the battle of Salamis.

enemy blocking their way of escape. The Persians, on the other hand, fooled by the message of Themistocles, expected to see the Greek ships in confusion and poised for flight. Instead of that the morning sun struck sparks of light from the serried ranks of bronze beaks, boldly challenging the Persian ships on every side. From the decks rose the war-chant or paean, carrying clear and strong to the very ears of the king himself.

There was to be no surprise attack and easy victory after all, but the Persians moved forward confidently. Weight of numbers alone was surely enough to let them sweep these upstart braggarts off the seas.

Among the Greeks there was still some hesitation. They had been wrought up to the pitch of battle, yet each hesitated, waiting for his neighbour to take the

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lead. On the right of the line lay the Aeginetan contingent, their confidence increased by the arrival only an hour before of the trireme that had been sent to bring the sacred symbols of the gods from Aegina. On the left of the line, opposite the pick of the Persian fleet, lay the Athenian ships, and right in the centre of their ranks the *Maiden Queen*.

On her poop Ameinias stood by the helmsman, his armour gleaming, his face set in lines of high purpose and determination. Beside him, commanding the soldiers, stood Cleander, also in full armour, but with a look of eager excitement on his face, alert and tense. Behind him stood Syrion.

"I've got Ameinias' permission to act as your attendant to-day," he had told Cleander. "I don't mean to be down among the rowers out of sight while you throw yourself into every possible kind of danger."

They laughed together, but were glad that this, the time of their country's crisis, should find them all three fighting side by side. Now, as the Greek ships hesitated, the enemy bearing down on them with loud clamour and the shouting of a dozen different war-cries, Ameinias lifted his eyes to the figure of Athene at his prow.

"Forward!" he shouted. "See where our own *Maiden Queen* beckons, reproaching us for our tardiness in the fight. For her honour and our own let us lead the attack."

Responding instantly to his appeal, the men raised an answering shout, the great oars swept the water, and in a moment the bronze beak of the *Maiden*

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Queen buried itself with a grinding crash in the side of a Phœnician galley opposite. The shock of their striking would have thrown less skilled seamen into confusion, but Ameinias knew his men. They held the trireme to her course, so that the Phœnician could not shake herself clear, and as the two ships surged forward together Cleander led the boarding-party from the *Maiden Queen* on to the deck of the enemy.

Ameinias' shout and the forward rush of his ship had given the Greeks the lead they were waiting for. With one accord they sprang into motion, and in a moment the fight had become general.

On the deck of the Phœnician galley the struggle was short and swift, for the hired soldiers of the Persians were no match for the Greeks once the Persian captain was dead. Cleander and his men, fighting with passion and fury, drove the enemy over the side, or left them dead on the deck. Then leaping back to their own ship they gave the signal to Ameinias. Slowly the *Maiden Queen* drove astern, the huge beak coming out of its bed with a rending and grating of wood, till at last it was free. The Phœnician heeled over and settled down slowly in the water, and Ameinias turned in search of other prey.

By now the whole strait was in confusion. The Greeks, keeping close together and holding their line fairly evenly, were causing havoc among the crowding vessels of the enemy, so many and so closely packed that they could not manœuvre as they ought. There was the sound of crashing blows as beaks drove home with irresistible force ; the sound of splintering oars

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as one galley swept along the oar-banks of another, leaving her helpless and unmanageable ; the whistling of arrows through the air and clash of arms when sword and spear met bronze helmet or brazen shield. Above all rose the voices of the combatants, the shouts of the victorious, the despairing shrieks of those who found themselves driven overboard into the welter of broken spars, sinking ships, and drowning men.

As the fight grew fiercer, panic spread among the Persian ships. Seeing themselves in such bad case, all thought of unity and loyalty was swallowed up in the desire for individual safety. Each of the many nations making up the fleet sought safety for itself, sacrificing its allies without a qualm, if necessary, and so making the task of the Greeks easier than before.

Ameinias was close on the heels of a Sidonian trireme when Cleander clutched his arm.

"Quick!" he shouted, "that Persian vessel on our right. Let the Sidonian go. I see Demetrius on the other's poop. Quickly, quickly!"

Without an instant's hesitation Ameinias abandoned his quarry and gave the order to the helmsman that would lay the *Maiden Queen* alongside the other ship. Battered and broken in the fierce struggle, there was no longer the grace and speed about her of her first onset, but she was still in better case than the Persian. The latter was holed in more than one place, her oars all gone, her mast lying over the side.

On the poop, among the debris and the wounded, Demetrius boldly tried to rally his men as Cleander and Syron led the Greeks aboard. Their forward

rush carried them right up to where the little group gathered round the captain stood waiting for them.

"Come out, traitor," challenged Cleander furiously. "Come out and pay your debt, the debt you owe to Athens for your treachery, and to me for the death of Phormus."

Pushing his men aside Demetrius faced Cleander boldly.

"You young fool," he mocked. "I know no loyalty to Athens but to her lawful rulers, the sons of Peisistratus. You have meddled too often in my affairs, things that were no concern of yours. I had thought Cleon would settle with you in Smyrna, but the Great King was too merciful. For your meddling and your folly take now the punishment the gods send by my hand."

Furiously he sprang on Cleander and their swords clashed as they met. Back and forwards, to and fro, they reeled and turned, slipping on the wet and sloping deck. Their flashing swords made a charmed circle of light, inside of which they saw and heard nothing but their own tense faces and laboured breathing. Suddenly both from the Persian ship and from the *Maiden Queen* there rose a shout of terror and dismay, and Ameinias' voice called Cleander's name above the turmoil. It distracted him for the merest second, so that he lowered his guard, and in that fraction of time Demetrius saw his opening and ran his sword through his opponent's shoulder.

Even as he did so the deck seemed to rise up under their feet and then slip away from them. The Persian vessel heeled over, hung for a moment, and then slowly

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turned turtle, throwing her freight of living, dead, and wounded into the sea. Dazed and bleeding, Cleander felt the cold shock as he met the water. Then the waves closed over his head, and he knew nothing more.



CHAPTER XVI

A NEW BEGINNING

OUT of a nightmare of darkness and pain Cleander opened his eyes feebly but clearly on his surroundings. The room where he lay was small, but the walls and ceiling were white and fresh, and through a little square window the afternoon sun slanted cheerfully. From the distance came the lowing of cattle, and near at hand hens were clucking contentedly. Cleander frowned in puzzlement. These sounds had no connection with any place he remembered, but he was too weak to think out what they could mean.

The curtain in the doorway was lifted noiselessly, and Daphne came in carrying a covered bowl. At the sight of Cleander's open eyes she gave a little cry of joy, and hastily putting down the bowl she came and leaned over him.

"Daphne," he whispered, "what's happened? Where am I?"

"You're all right, darling," Daphne murmured soothingly. "You're on the island of Salamis at Syrión's farm. You've been very ill, dear, but you'll soon be well again now. I've brought you some wonderful soup of Acte's making. She says it's bound to put strength back into you. Now don't speak till you've eaten it."

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Lifting him a little on his pillow she fed him gently with the contents of the bowl until all was finished. Then she set it down and sat down herself on the bed. Cleander fixed anxious eyes on her face.

"Ameinias? Syrion?" he questioned weakly. "Tell me what happened, Daphne. Are they alive or dead?"

"Both alive, dear, thanks to the gods," replied Daphne. "Now lie still and I'll tell you what happened. When the Persian ship sank, you and Syrion were thrown into the water along with all the others. Demetrius had wounded you, you know, and you weren't able to help yourself, but Syrion was watching for you, and as you came to the surface he managed to take hold of you and drag you to a spar. Just then Demetrius caught hold of the same spar, and when he saw you he struck at you again, but Syrion got between."

Here she hesitated a moment, and her voice faltered ever so slightly.

"Syrion killed him," she said at last. "Then he managed to push the spar near enough to the *Maiden Queen* for them to haul you both on board."

Cleander lay silent for a few moments when she had finished, his tired brain slowly taking in what she had told him.

"Then we must have won the battle?" he questioned at last.

"Indeed we did," Daphne exclaimed. "The Persian fleet fell to pieces, each ship trying only to save itself, even if it meant sacrificing its allies. When the fleet was broken and fleeing, the Great King

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took fright too. They say he was in terror lest we should sail round to the Hellespont and destroy his bridge and so cut off his retreat. Anyway, no sooner had his fleet gone than he marched out of Athens and went hurrying off to Persia. He left an army in Thessaly, though, to fight again in the spring."

"O divine Salamis, thou too shalt destroy the children of women, either at the seed-time or at the harvest,'" quoted Cleander.

Daphne slipped from the bed to kneel on the floor, laying her head beside Cleander's.

"The gods have been very kind to us," she whispered softly. "They have given us back our beautiful city; they have driven off an enemy that seemed invincible; they have saved the lives of all of us in the hour of our country's bitterest sorrow and danger; and they have given you back to me from the very gates of death."

With an effort Cleander turned his head and looked into her eyes. Tears of mingled joy and sorrow hung on her long lashes, but she smiled at him with undaunted love and courage.

"Only get well and strong again, Cleander," she begged. "Then we can start to build up our life together in the new Athens that is rising already out of the ruins of the old."

Day by day, after that, strength began to flow back into Cleander's wasted frame. His wound, too long untended, had been slow to heal, and as a result of his plunge in the chilly waters of the Bay of Salamis high fever had attacked him. Day and night Daphne, Acte, and Syron had nursed him untiringly, and were

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rewarded at last by seeing the colour creep back into his cheeks and the flesh on his body grow firm and healthy again.

Though it was now some weeks since the great sea fight the weather was still mild, and the glen where Syrion's farm lay was snugly sheltered from cold winds. Every day Cleander was helped out into the garden, and there he would sit, drinking in the sunshine and the clear invigorating air. Very often Syrion would be sitting beside him, leaving the work of the farm while they talked over every detail of the fight and all that had happened since.

In spite of the Persian army wintering in Thessaly, the southern states of Greece had united in rejoicings over their miraculous deliverance. Corinth and Aegina, Megara and Troezen, all had played a worthy part in the struggle, and could now share the honour of the victory. But of all the allies none stood higher in renown than Athens, and of all the Athenians the noblest and most admired was now Themistocles. Even the haughty Spartans recognized that it was his indomitable will and unfailing resource that had led them to victory, and heaped upon him such honours as no other Greek had ever received from Spartan hands. Among those fêted along with him was Ameinias, whose forward rush had served as the signal to attack for the whole fleet. He had written from Sparta describing their reception, the gifts and honours heaped upon Themistocles, and how, when they left, they were to be escorted by the flower of the Spartan cavalry—an unheard-of condescension.

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When the Persians withdrew out of Attica the exiled Athenians came hurrying back to their devastated country, ready to make a fresh start, to build up again all that happy, prosperous life that had been so cruelly interrupted. Among the first to go were Archelous and his family, and now, as strength returned to Cleander, he began to be impatient to join them.

"I can't be the only one idle and useless," he complained, when Daphne urged him to wait a little longer. "We must get back and take our share in the work. Syrion, when you send over supplies, let my father know that I am coming too."

A few days later a little party left the farm and made their way down the steep path to the creek where Syrion's boat rocked against a wooden jetty. First went the two slave boys whom Syrion had bought from among the prisoners of war. They carried baskets of vegetables and fruit, eggs and fowls—supplies so much needed in the half ruined city. When all these were stowed away under the thwarts, Syrion, Cleander, and Daphne took their places, the square brown sail was raised, and the little boat slid out into the strait.

There was no sign now of the bitter conflict that had covered those calm waters with debris of ships and bodies of men. Those vessels that had not been sunk had been driven ashore, there to be broken up for firewood, or for repairing the remaining ships of the Greek fleet. The dead, too, had been gathered together for burial, in accordance with Greek custom. Cleander gazed in silence on the scene of the greatest

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battle in the history of his race, while the sea breeze bore them swiftly across to the harbour of Piraeus.

All along the shore on both sides of the harbour the shipyards hummed with life. New ships were being built, old ships being repaired, men and boys hastening the work in case the enemy should return. Beyond the harbour the long road to Athens was thronged with people. Tradesmen and fishermen, shipwrights and masons, captains and magistrates passed up and down, bringing supplies to the city, carrying orders from the generals, or following their own private concerns.

Archelous had sent a rather battered chariot to meet them, and in this they threaded their way among the crowds.

"This doesn't look as if Athens were destroyed," exclaimed Cleander in amazement.

"Destroyed! I should think not," Syrion assured him. "The city is like a bee-hive at swarming time. Luckily for you, the wind drove the flames away from the Street of Apollo, so your father's house is intact. That will leave you free to help with other things."

As they came into the city, Cleander gazed with anger and dismay at the havoc the Persians had caused. Whole streets were reduced to mere heaps of rubble, among which the returned exiles camped as best they could.

"There's your father," exclaimed Syrion, and halted the chariot beside a group of men who were clearing away a huge heap of broken masonry. Archelous came hurrying forward with outstretched hands.

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"Cleander!" he exclaimed, "the gods be thanked that I see you well and strong again. Welcome to Athens."

Cleander jumped out of the chariot and clasped his father's hand.

"Syrior, you take Daphne on to the house, will you?" he said. "I'm going with my father. I want to see what Athens has endured, and how her citizens are bringing her to life again."

The chariot drove off and Archelous and Cleander walked away. From one street to another they passed, examining the charred and broken remains of what had been so fair and lovely, speaking a word of encouragement to the men who toiled to clear away the rubbish and to bring order out of confusion.

"We magistrates are organizing the people into companies," Archelous explained, "so that they will work together instead of each man struggling alone. Those of us who have any money left are lending it freely, and the Council is getting bigger supplies than ever from the silver mines."

It was evening when at last they made their way back to the Street of Apollo. The lamps were lit in the courtyard, and the family was gathered there to welcome Cleander home.

Agariste was in her accustomed place under the lime tree. She had lost much of her air of languid prettiness, and even as she rested, her hands were busy with her spindle. Along with the three girls she was busy all day long, preparing food for the workmen or weaving and spinning to provide clothes for the destitute refugees who crowded the city or

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passed through it on their way to their homes in the country north of Athens.

"We're having guests for dinner," she said proudly. "There isn't much variety of dishes, but we felt we must celebrate being all together in our own home. And as none of the guests are strangers we women folk are going to join you after dinner."

One after another the guests arrived. First came Ameinias, having ridden up from the shipyards where he was supervising the repairs to the *Maiden Queen*. Soon after him Aeschylus arrived, after a day spent in the Temple of Dionysus, where the great theatre was being restored ready for the festival in the spring. Themistocles followed, leaving a meeting of the Council to join these loyal friends in their reunion.

"Where is Syrion?" demanded Archelous, when all was ready. "He must join us. But for him we should have been mourning to-day instead of rejoicing."

"And but for him," Chlaris whispered to Cleander, "we'd have nothing to serve at our feast to-night."

So Cleander himself went in search of the truant and brought him in to join the feast.

What tales they had to tell, these men who had come back as by a miracle from the tumult of death and destruction at Salamis. They lived again those hours of uncertainty, of crisis, and of frenzied strife, each looking at the other in wonder and awe that they should be thus sitting together in peace again.

But when the battle had been re-fought their talk turned naturally to the future, and to the great task that now lay before the people of Athens..

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"Some of us know our parts already," said Themistocles. "To me falls the heavy responsibility of leadership."

He spoke gravely, but there was no mistaking the pride and confidence, almost too marked, with which he accepted his acknowledged position. Here was a man who would brook neither check nor rival.

"Archelous here must help to reorganize the city's life," he went on, "while Aeschylus lifts us on the wings of song to the lofty heights of Olympus. Ameinias, you are determined to remain with the fleet, they tell me. And Syrion here has shown where he intends to make his place. But what about you, Cleander? You are the only one whose decision we have not heard. Where is your place to be?"

All eyes were turned on Cleander, waiting for him to speak.

"Father and I settled that to-day," he said at last. "I've had enough of wandering. Daphne and I are going out to the olive garden to make our home. There I can help to feed the people of Athens, and at the same time help to foster her trade. On these two foundations you others must build up that glorious structure of freedom and fame that we expect the new Athens to become. In the olive garden I first got my chance to serve Greece. In it, Daphne and I first discovered that we loved each other. We are going back there to live and work, and there our son will be born and learn to live for Athens as we shall do ourselves."

Themistocles sprang to his feet.

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"Let us drink to the Athens that is to be," he cried. "May the gods crown her with honour and glory; may she hold up to all Greece the torch of freedom; may she follow the twin stars of beauty and truth; and may her citizens serve her with unfailing devotion and undaunted courage, remembering Marathon and Salamis, where 'the sons of Athens laid the bright foundation of liberty!' Drink with me to our glorious city."

With one accord they rose to their feet, the lamp-light falling on their upturned faces and on the wine-cups in their upraised hands. No shadow fell across that moment of exaltation; no chill breath from the unknown future clouded their joyful confidence as they acclaimed the toast. They were young, they were strong, and life and love had been preserved for them on the very threshold of destruction. Like the phoenix, Athens should rise again from her ashes, and they would be among the foremost to lift her to a pinnacle of greatness that should astonish the world.

"Athens! Athens!" they shouted, till the rafters rang again.

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SALAMIS

AND night wore on, and never sound nor sight
From the Greek fleet gave sign of secret flight ;
Not till the wild white horses of the morn
Took all the earth with glory ; then was borne
A sound across the sea, a voice, a strong
Clamour exultant like a leaping song,
And Echo answering from the island rock
Cried battle. To our men there came a shock
Of fear and hopes undone. No note there rang
Of flight in that high paeon that they sang,
Only glad courage, hot to do and dare.
Out burst their trumpets, flaming through the air.
In splashed their foaming oars, and straining stirred
The briny furrows at the helmsman's word,
And all the ships were out and clear to view.
The right wing led the van, in order due,
Behind it the whole fleet, prow after prow.
Then one great shout, " Now, sons of Hellas, now !
Set Hellas free, set free your wives, your homes,
Your gods' high altars and your fathers' tombs.
Now all is on the stake." At once from us
A storm of Persian voices clamorous
Made answer, but no time was left to speak.
Already ship on ship its brazen beak
Had driven. The first rammer was a Greek,
Which sheared away a great Sidonian's crest ;
Then close, one on another, charged the rest.

At first the long-drawn Persian line was strong
And held ; but in those narrows such a throng
Was crowded, ship to ship could bring no aid.
Nay, with their own bronze-fanged beaks they made
Destruction ; a whole length of oars one beak
Would shatter ; and with purposed art the Greek

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Ringed us outside, and pressed, and struck ; and we—
Our oarless hulls went over, till the sea
Could scarce be seen, with wrecks and corpses spread.
There reefs and beaches too were filled with dead,
And every ship in our great fleet away
Rowed in wild flight. . . .

. . . With crying all the air was filled,
Out from the narrows to the shoreless main,
Of slain men and men wailing for the slain,
Till the blind veil of night swept all away.

AESCHYLUS: *The Persians*.

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THE END

